

# THE QUEST AND THE GOAL

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NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM  
PONDICHERRY

S/208

**Paper : Rs. 3-8-0**

**Cloth : Rs. 4-8-0**

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1954





*Publishers:*

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM  
PONDICHERRY

First Published in May 1954

~~12015~~ 6713

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SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM PRESS  
PONDICHERRY

Printed in India

124/2/54/100

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Of the Papers comprising Sections One and Two, "Physics or Philosophy" was originally published in the '*Hindoostan Quarterly*' (1944 July-Sept.) and "Observer and the Observed" in the Silver Jubilee Number of the '*Proceedings of Indian Philosophical Congress*' (1950). The rest and the concluding article in Section Three were contributed to the Annual Numbers of Sri Aurobindo Mandir, Calcutta (1948-50) and the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay (1949-52). The Notes and Comments (Section Three) are selections from the editorials written by the author for the *Advent Quarterly* (1945-50).



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*Section One*

# I

## MAN AND THE GODS

THE Earth symbolises and epitomises material Nature. It is the body and substance, the very personification, of unconsciousness—Ignorance carried to the last limit and concretised. It represents, figures the very opposite of the Reality at the summit. The supreme and original Reality is the quaternary: (1) Light, (2) Truth, (3) Love and (4) Life. They are the first and primal godheads with whom creation starts and who preside over the whole play of the manifestation. These gods that emanated out of the supreme consciousness of the Divine Mother as her fundamental aspects and personalities had automatically an absolute freedom of action and movement, otherwise they would not be divine personalities. And this freedom could be exercised and was in fact exercised in cutting the tie with the mother consciousness, in order to follow a line of independent and separate development instead of a merger life of solidarity with the Supreme. The result was immediate and drastic—the precipitation of a physical life and an earthly existence which negated the very principles of the original nature of the godheads and brought forth exactly their contraries: instead of Light there brooded Darkness and Inconscience, Truth turned

to Falsehood, Love and Delight gave place to Hatred and Suffering and finally, instead of Life and Immortality there appeared Death. That was how separation, "the disobedience" of the Bible, caused the distortion that turned the gods into Asuras, that was how Lucifer became Satan.

And that was how Paradise was lost. But the story of Paradise Regained is yet more marvellous. When the Divine Mother, the creative infinite Consciousness found herself parcelled out and scattered (even like the body of Sati borne about by Shiva, in the well-known Indian legend) and lost in unconsciousness, something shot down from the Highest into the lowest, something in response to an appeal, a cry, as it were, from the depth of the utter hopelessness in the heart of Matter and the Inconscient. A dumb last-minute S.O.S from below—a *De profundis clamavit*—went forth and the Grace descended: the Supreme himself came down and entered into the scuttled dead particles of earth's dust as a secret core of light and flame, just a spark out of his own conscious substance. The Earth received the Grace and held it in her bosom. Thus she had her soul born in her—the psychic being that is to grow and evolve and bring about her redemption, her transmutation into the divine substance.

This is the special privilege accorded to earth, viz. she has a soul, a spark consciousness imbedded in her unconscious substance that came from the highest summit, from the supreme Divine himself. And thus earth became the representative, the personified form

of the material universe; she became the mouthpiece of the extended universe, the head and front of creation, so that in and through her the supreme manifestation, the incarnation of the Divine may take place.

The Earth has come out of the universe, has evolved out of it as a distinct entity, carrying and developing within it the end, the purpose for which God created the world out of Himself. And as the earth epitomises the universe and becomes the instrument and channel of an evolutionary manifestation, even so man takes up within himself the earthly life and leads it to the high fulfilment intended for it. Earth is there as the home of man, as his mother and nurse; she has fashioned man out of her substratum and is seeking through him the release, the growth and expression of her secret consciousness.

(2)

The purpose of man's existence upon earth is the growth of his consciousness. Each human being is a soul, a psyche, a spark from the Spirit sent down into Matter, a ray from the Divine Light descended upon earth and housed in a physical body. The spark, the ray is to attain the amplitude and splendour of its original form in the divine consciousness, to express that plenitude here below. This original, the archetype of each and every individual embodied upon earth is the central being, Jivatman. At the beginning the individual soul



in terrestrial evolution is just a tiny particle of consciousness: it evolves, that is to say, grows and increases in stature and potency, through a series of lives upon this earth, each life bringing its quota of experience that serves to tend the flame. When the soul has thus grown and finally reached its optimum, and is in union with its original and archetype in the fullness of self-expression, what next? What is its destiny thereafter, how does it live or move henceforward?

Three courses are open to the perfected and completely developed soul. First, it may remain, contented with its fullness, self-gathered and self-sufficient, dwelling in its own domain—the psychic world—and enjoying the even, equal, undisturbed felicity and beatitude of union with the Divine. This status may perhaps not be chosen by many or for a long time. The second line that the Psyche can adopt is to come down or remain upon earth and take a share in the fulfilment of the Divine Purpose in the world. That purpose is the transformation of the physical, making the material an embodiment of the divine Light and Power and Bliss and Immortality. A third development also may take place; this is not strictly speaking normal, not the logical and inevitable happening in the course of things, nor does it depend wholly upon any personal choice of the psychic being, so to say. It occurs when the force of a higher destiny operates, for a special work and at a special time. It is when the psychic being is contacted with, made to identify itself with, a godhead under a higher dispensation, when,

in a word, a divinity descends into a human soul.

The gods are especial powers and executive agents of the one Divine. They move and act in a special way with a special end in view. They are, we may say, high-brow entities: they carry things with a high hand. That is to say, what they have got to do, they seek to do without any consideration or computation of the means, without regard to the pauses and hindrances that naturally attend all terrestrial and human achievements. God said, let there be light, and there was light. That is also the way of the gods. There is here an imperial majesty and grandeur, a sweeping mastery and sovereign indifference,

Remote from the Force that cries out in pain <sup>1</sup>

and

Above joy and sorrow is that grandeur's walk <sup>2</sup>

The gods possess this high quality of crystal purity, of a concentrated seeing will in which vision and execution form one single simultaneous movement, of the taut yet perfectly serene rhythm of a hero-consciousness. Something of that grandiose sweep of godly march—the Virgilian *gradus divi*—is echoed in these Vedic lines hymned to Varuna:

*Adabdhāni varunasya vratāni vicakaśaccandramā naktameti*

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*—Book I, Canto 4

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

"The moon comes out in the night revealing the inviolable workings of Varuna."

Such are the gods, Such is their nature:  
The Spirit's free and absolute potencies  
Burn in the solitude of the thought of God<sup>1</sup>

and

Unmoved by cry of revolt and ignorant prayer  
They reckon not our virtue and our sin,  
They bend not to the voices that implore.<sup>2</sup>

Human nature, human movement, is, however, different. Man, the terrestrial creature, has developed as the result of a slow growth, through struggle and suffering, the *sturm und drang* of an arduous ascent. He knows of things which the gods do not. He has an experience which even they, strange to say, covet. First of all, it must be borne in mind that the gods represent only one mode of consciousness, a fixed and definite type—a god is bound by his godhood; but man embodies all the modes of consciousness, he is an ever growing and changing type. Man is an epitome of creation, he is coterminous with Nature. If he is that within which is wholly divine—consciousness and bliss, truth and immortality—phenomenally he is also quite the opposite—earthly, unconsciousness, pain and suffering, ignorance and falsehood, incapacity and death. If heaven is his father, the earth is his mother—*dyaur me pitā*

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*—Book I, Canto 4

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

*mātā prthivīriyam*. And all the gradations in between he has in him and can become any.

Man possesses characters that mark him as an entity *sui generis* and give him the value that is his. First, toil and suffering and more failures than success have given him the quality of endurance and patience, of humility and quietness. That is the quality of earth-nature—earth is always spoken of by the poets and seers as all-bearing and all-forgiving. She never protests under any load put upon her, never rises in revolt, never in a hurry or in worry, she goes on with her appointed labour silently, steadily, calmly, unflinchingly. Human consciousness can take infinite pains, go through the infinite details of execution, through countless repetitions and mazes: patience and perseverance are the very badge and blazon of the tribe. Ribhus, the artisans of immortality—children of Mahasaraswati—were originally men, men who have laboured into godhood. Human nature knows to wait, wait infinitely, as it has all the eternity before it and can afford and is prepared to continue and persist life after life. I do not say that all men can do it and are of this nature; but there is this essential capacity in human nature. The gods, who are usually described as the very embodiment of calmness and firmness, of a serene and concentrated will to achieve, nevertheless suffer ill any delay or hindrance to their work. Man has not perhaps the even tenor, the steadiness of their movement, even though intense and fast flowing; but what man possesses is persistence through ups and downs



—his path is rugged with rise and fall, as the poet says. The steadiness or the staying power of the gods contains something of the nature of indifference, something hard in its grain, not unlike a crystal or a diamond. But human patience, when it has formed and taken shape, possesses a mellowness, an understanding, a sweet reasonableness and a resilience all its own. And because of its intimacy with the tears of things, because of its long travail and calvary, human consciousness is suffused with a quality that is peculiarly human and humane—that of sympathy, compassion, comprehension, the psychic feeling of closeness and oneness. The gods are, after all, egoistic; unless in their supreme supramental status where they are one and identical with the Divine himself, on the lower levels, in their own domains, they are separate, more or less immiscible entities, as it were; greater stress is laid here upon their individual functioning and fulfilment than upon their solidarity. Even if they have not the egoism of the Asuras that sets itself in revolt and antagonism to the Divine, still they have to the fullest extent the sense of a separate mission that each has to fulfil, which none else can fulfil and so each is bound rigidly to its own orbit of activity. There is no mixture in their workings—*na methate*, as the Vedas say; the conflict of the later gods, the apple of discord that drove each to establish his hegemony over the rest, as narrated in the mythologies and popular legends, carry the difference to a degree natural to the human level and human modes and reactions. The egoism of

the gods may have the gait of aristocracy about it, it has the aloofness and indifference and calm non-chalance that go often with nobility: it has a family likeness to the egoism of an ascetic, of a saint—it is *sāttwic*; still it is egoism. It may prove even more difficult to break and dissolve than the violent and ebullient *rājasic* pride of a vital being. Human failings in this respect are generally more complex and contain all shades and rhythms. And yet that is not the whole or dominant mystery of man's nature. His egoism is thwarted at every step—from outside, by the force of circumstances, the force of counter-egoisms, and from inside, for there is there the thin little voice that always cuts across egoism's play and takes away from it something of its elemental blind momentum. The gods know not of this division in their nature, this schizophrenia, as the malady is termed nowadays, which is the source of the eternal strain of melancholy in human nature of which Matthew Arnold speaks, of the Shelleyan saddest thoughts: Nietzsche need not have gone elsewhere in his quest for the origin and birth of Tragedy. A Socrates discontented, the Christ as the Man of Sorrows, and Amitabha, the soul of pity and compassion are peculiarly human phenomena. They are not merely human weaknesses and failings that are to be brushed aside with a godlike disdain; but they contain and yield a deeper sap of life and out of them a richer fulfilment is being elaborated.

Human understanding, we know, is a tangled skein of light and shade—more shade perhaps than light—of

knowledge and ignorance, of ignorance straining towards knowledge. And yet this limited and earthly frame that mind is has something to give which even the overmind of the gods does not possess and needs. It is indeed a frame, even though perhaps a steel frame, to hold and fix the pattern of knowledge, that arranges, classifies, consolidates effective ideas, as they are translated into facts and events. It has not the initiative, the creative power of the vision of a god, but it is an indispensable aid, a precious instrument for the canalisation and expression of that vision, for the intimate application of the divine inspiration to physical life and external conduct. If nothing else, it is a sort of blue print which an engineer of life cannot forego if he has to execute his work of building a new life accurately and beautifully and perfectly.

(3)

We have spoken of the stability, the fixity, the rigidity even, of the godtype and we contrasted it with the variability, the many-sidedness, the multiple character of the human consciousness. In another view, however, the tables are turned and the opposite appears as the truth. Man, for example, has a physical body and nothing is more definite and fixed and rigid than this material sheath. The gods have no body, but they have a form which is supple and changeful, not hard and crystallised like the human figure. Gods, we said, are cosmic forces

—lines (or vectors, if we wish to be scientifically precise) of universal forces; this does not mean that they have no shape or form. They too have a form and can be recognised by it even as a human being is recognisable by his body. In spite of variability the form retains its identity. The form changes, for a god has the capacity to act in different contexts at the same time; within his own universe a god is multi-dimensional. The Indian seer and artist often seeks to convey this character of the immortals by giving them a plurality of arms and heads. In modern times the inspiration behind the surrealist movement lies precisely in this attempt to express a simultaneity of diverse gestures and activities, a synthetic close-up of succeeding moments and disparate objects or events. But in spite of all changes Proteus remains Proteus and can be recognised as such by the vigilant and careful eye. The human frame, we have said, is more fixed and rigid, being made of the material substance. It has not evidently the variability of the body of a god. And yet there is a deeper mystery: the human body is not or need not be so inflexible as it appears to be or as it usually is. It has considerable plastic capacities. We would say that the human body holds a marvellous *juste milieu*. By its solid concreteness it acts as a fortress for the inner consciousness to dwell in safe from easy attacks of the hostiles: it acts also as a firm weapon for the same inner consciousness to cut into the material world and indent and impress its pattern of truth upon an otherwise hard and refractory material.



made of ignorance and obscurity and falsehood. Furthermore, it is supple enough to receive and record into its grain the pattern and substance of the higher reality. The image of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ is symbolic of the alchemy of which the human body is capable when one knows how to treat it in occult knowledge and power. The human body can suffer a sea change which is not within the reach of the radiant body of an immortal.

## (4)

Divine Love is something aloof, apart, beyond. Even then it is there behind supporting, animating, helping all and every thing. It is indeed the secret Delight in things. It is the sense of utter identity of self and self. Its status is in the Transcendent where Love and Life and Light are fused together into one single absolute reality. When it expresses itself, that is to say, when it makes its presence felt as such in its supreme nature, it seems almost like indifference, so calm and tranquil and poised it is, wide and vast and far and away, unlike anything human. Indeed human consciousness would view it almost as heartlessness. It has the non-humanity of which A.E. speaks in those famous lines:

Like winds or waters were her ways;  
They heed not immemorial cries;  
They move to their high destinies  
Beyond the little voice that prays.

or to which Victor Hugo gives a very similar expression

Nos destins ténébreux vont sous des lois immenses  
Que rien ne déconcerte et que rien n'attendrit.  
Vous ne pouvez avoir de subites clémences  
Qui dérangent le monde, ô Dieu, tranquille esprit! <sup>1</sup>

This is the divine love, love proper to Maheshwari. But there is another love more intimate, close, human—the love of Mahalakshmi. This is the love that comes down here upon earth and takes on an earthly quality, a terrestrial vibration. In other words, it has what we call the psychic quality that characterises the human feeling with its peculiar charm and sweetness and intensity and magic. It goes without saying that by human we do not mean here the gross human thing which is more animal than human, a matter of the external heart, made up of crude passion and egoistic demand, but that which is the truth of all this deviation and deformation, lying behind in the inner heart. The psychic being is a special creation in and for earth, in and for man, the earthly creature. It is, as we have said, divine Grace imbedded in Matter.

The gods are glorious beings; they are aspects and personalities of the Divine, presiding and ruling over the cosmic laws, each with his own truth and norm and dominion, although, in the higher status, all work together and har-

<sup>1</sup> Our dark destinies move under vast laws that nothing diverts, nothing softens. Thou canst not have sudden clemencies that disturb the world, O God, Spirit tranquil!

moniously. Even then they do not possess a soul, a psychic core of being. They are forms and powers of consciousness organised round a divine truth, a typical Idea; but they do not have this exquisite presence secretly seated in the heart, which is the privilege of the terrestrial creature.

And the exquisiteness, the special quality of this inner Heart is mostly if not wholly derived from a particular factor of terrestrial evolution. For the journey here is a sacrifice, a passage through pain and suffering, even through frustration and death. The tears that accompany the mortal being in his calvary of an earthly life serve precisely as a holy unction of purification, give a sweet intensity to all his urges in the progressive march to Resurrection. This is the Immanent Divine who has to be worshipped and realised as much as the Transcendent Divine, if man is to fulfil himself wholly and earth justify its existence.

The legend of the great ascetic Sankaracharya going straight to the realisation of the Supreme knowledge in Brahman but obliged to come down and enter into another earthly body for the experience of love, even earthly love, in order to complete his realisation is instructive and illustrates our point.

As the human aspiration is to reach out towards divinity, the gods too at times are not satisfied with their closed divine status. They lean down to help humanity, to bring it up into their consciousness; but also they seek this contact and unification for their own sake, for a change and transformation in themselves; they may seek to rise further

in a higher status of consciousness or they may wish to participate in the earthly travail, in the human endeavour. In either case the channel lies through the human consciousness. In the Vedas the gods always look to men, almost depend upon them for their own fulfilment and enrichment. Men ask the gods for wealth and plenty—material as well as spiritual—the gods too ask from men the sacrifice, the sacrifice that pours out the substance of the human reality upon which they feed and grow. The Gita speaks of the same covenant—the interchange of gifts between the two, each increasing the other and both attaining the highest good.



## II

### GOD'S LABOUR

SRI Aurobindo's Yoga, it has been said, begins where other yogas end. Other yogas end by the attainment of the Brahman or some form or mode of it or something akin to it, which means the transcendent Reality, the supreme status of the Spirit beyond name and form, beyond all particular manifestation. It is the final realisation of the soul in its upward ascent, the *nec plus ultra*. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga takes that poise for granted and upon it bases its own development and structure. In other words, it works for the descent of the Spirit upon the level from which the Spirit worked up. The Mystery of the descent is the whole characteristic secret of this Yoga.

The general idea of a descent of the Spirit, that is to say, the Divine, the conception of *avatāra* and *avatarāṇa* is, of course, not new. But here there is a difference. Avatara or Avatarāṇa in the older disciplines was more or less an intervention of God as God, the working of a Force come specifically in the midst of the world circumstances, maintaining still its divine transcendental character, to work out a given problem, accomplish a special mission and then, when the work is done, retire to its own status. It is, as it were, a weapon of flame and light hurled into the earthly fray—even like the discus of Vishnu—and having

accomplished its mission, going back into the hand of the thrower, its fount and origin. The task of the Avatara was usually *bhūbhāra-haraṇa*, lightening earth's load: it means removing the sinful and preserving the virtuous, re-establishing the reign of Law. Esoterically, he also embodied the Way to spiritual fulfilment. There was no question of saving humanity—it was more serving than saving—by transfiguring it, giving it a new body and life and mind, nor was there any idea of raising the level of earth-consciousness.

The Divine acts in three different ways in his three well-known aspects. As the transcendent Reality he is above and beyond creation, he is the Unmanifest, although he may hold within either involved or dissolved the entire manifestation. Next, he is the manifestation, the cosmic or the universal; he is one with creation, immanent in it, still its master and lord. Finally, he has an individual aspect: he is a Person with whom human beings can enter into relations of love and service. The Divine incarnate as a human being, is a special manifestation of the Individual Divine. Even then, as an embodied earthly person, he may act in a way characteristic of any of the three aspects. The Divine descended upon earth, as viewed by Sri Aurobindo, does not come in his transcendental aspect, fundamentally aloof and away, in his absolute power and consciousness, working miracles here; for transcendence can do nothing but that in the midst of conditions left as they are. Nor does he manifest himself only as his cosmic power and consciousness, embedded in the creation and



## THE QUEST AND THE GOAL

all-pervading, exercising his influence through the presence of Universal Law, perhaps in a concentrated form, still working gradually, step by step, as though through a logical process, for the maintenance of the natural order and harmony, *lokasamgraha*. God can be more than that, individualised in a special, even a human sense. His individual being can and does hold within itself his cosmic and transcendental self covertly in a way but overtly too in a singular manner at the same time. The humanised personality of the Divine with his special role and function is at the very centre of Sri Aurobindo's solution of the world enigma. The little poem *God's Labour* in its short compass outlines and explains beautifully the grand Mystery.

The usual idea of God (as the theists hold, for example) is that he is an infinite eternal impassible being, aloof from human toils and earthly turmoils, himself untouched by these and yet, in and through them, directing the world for an inscrutable purpose, unless it is for leaning towards it and stretching out the hand of Grace to those of the mortals who wish to come out of the nightmare of life, sever the coils of earthly existence. But the Divine in order to be and remain divine need not hold to his seat above and outside the creation, severely separated from his creatures. He can, on the contrary, become truly the ordinary man and labour as all others, yet maintaining his divinity and being conscious of it. After all, is not man, every human being, built in the same pattern, a composite of the earthly human element supported and infused by a

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secret divine element? However, God, the individual Divine, does become man, one of them and one with them. Only, his labour thereby increases manifold, hard and heavy, although for that very reason full of a bright rich multiple promise. The Divine's self-humanisation has for it a double purpose: (1) to show man by example how he can become what he truly is, how he can divinise himself: the Divine as man lives out the life of a *sādhaka* wholly and completely; (2) to help concretely by his own force of consciousness the world and man in their endeavour for progress and evolution, to give the help wholly and completely from the innermost status of the self down to the most external physical body and the material field. This help again is a twofold function. The first is to make available, gather within easy reach, the high realisations, the spiritual treasures that are normally stored in a heaven somewhere else. The Divine Man brings down the divine attributes close to our earth, turns them from mere far possibilities into near probabilities, even imminent realities. They are made part and parcel, constituent elements of the earthly atmosphere, so that one has only to open one's mouth to breathe in, extend one's arms to seize and possess them: even to this opening and this gesture man is helped by the concrete touch and presence of the Divine. Further, the help and succour come in another way which is more intimate, more living and appealing to man.

A great mystery of existence, its central rub is the presence of Evil. All spiritual, generally all human endeavour has to face and answer this Sphinx. As he answers, so will

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be his fate. He cannot rise up even if he wishes, earth cannot progress even when there is the occasion, because of this besetting obstacle. It has many names and many forms. It is Sin or Satan in Christianity; Buddhism calls it Mara. In India it is generally known as Maya. Grief and sorrow, weakness and want, disease and death are its external and ubiquitous forms. It is a force of gravitation, as graphically named by a modern Christian mystic, that pulls man down, fixes him upon earth with its iron law of mortality, never allowing him to mount high and soar in the spiritual heavens. It has also been called the Wheel of Karma or the cycle of Ignorance. And the aim of all spiritual seekers has been to rise out of it—somehow, by force of *tapasyā*, energy of concentrated will or divine Grace—go through or by-pass and escape into the Beyond. This is the path of ascent I referred to at the outset. In this view it is taken for granted that this creation is transient and empty of happiness—*anityam asukham* (Gita)—it is *anatta*, empty of self or consciousness (Buddha) and it will be always so. The only way to deal with it, the way of the wise, is to discard it and pass over.

Sri Āurobindo's view is different. He says Evil can be and has to be conquered here itself, here upon this earth and in this body—the ancients also said, *ihaiva tairjitah*, they have conquered even here, *prākṣariravimokṣaṇāt*, before leaving the body. You have to face Evil full-square and conquer it, conquer it not in the sense that you simply rise above it so that it no longer touches you, but that you remain where you are in the very field of Evil



and drive it out from there completely, erase and annihilate it where it was reigning supreme. Hence God has to come down from his heaven and dwell here upon earth and among men and in the conditions of mortality, show thus by his living and labour that this earthly earth can be transformed into a heavenly earth and this human body into a "body divine".

Matter or the physical body is not by itself the centre of gravity of the human consciousness; it is not that that pins the soul or the self to the life of pain and misery and incapacity and death. Matter is not the Evil, nor made up of Evil; it contains or harbours evil under the present circumstances, even as dross is mixed up, inextricably as it appears, with the noble metal in the natural ore; but the dross can be eradicated and the free metal brought out, pure and noble in its own true nature. It is, as Rumi, the Persian mystic, says in his famous imagery, like a piece of iron, dull and dismal to look at, but when put into fire slowly acquires the quality of fire, turning into a glowing and radiant beauty, yet maintaining its original form and individuality and concrete, even material reality. Now, the crust or dross that has to be eliminated in Matter is called by Sri Aurobindo "Inconscience". Matter is inconscient, therefore it is unconscious and ignorant. Make it conscious, it will be radiant and full of knowledge. That is the great transformation needed, the only way to true and total reformation. The Divine descends into Matter precisely to work out that transformation.

It is a long dredging process, tedious and arduous, requiring the utmost patience and perseverance, even to the absolute degree. For Inconscience, in essence, although a contingent reality, local and temporal, and therefore transient, is nonetheless the hardest, most obdurate and resistant reality: it lies thick and heavy upon the human vehicle. It is massed layer upon layer. Its first formation in the higher altitudes of the mind is perhaps like a thin fluid deposit; it begins as an individualised separative consciousness stressing more and more its exclusiveness. Through the lower ranges of the mind and the vitality it crystallises and condenses gradually; in the worlds of thinking and feeling, enjoying and dynamic activity, it has still a malleable and mixed consistency, but when it reaches and possesses the physical being, it becomes the impervious solid obscurity that Matter presents.

The root of the Cosmic Evil is in Matter. From there it shoots up and overshadows the upper layers of our being and consciousness. Even if the mind is cleaned, the vital cleared, still if the physical consciousness is not sufficiently probed into, purified and reclaimed, then nothing permanent is done, one would build upon sand. All efforts, spiritual or other, at the regeneration and reformation of mankind and a good many individual endeavours too have come to a sorry end, because the foundation was not laid sufficiently deep and secure. One must dig into Matter as far down as possible—like Rishi Agastya in the Veda—even to the other end. For

there is another mystery there, perhaps the Mystery of mysteries. The deeper you go down into Matter, as you clear up the jungle and bring in the higher light, you discover and unlock strange and mighty energies of consciousness secreted there, even like the uranium pile in the atomic world. It is revealed to you that In-conscience is not total absence of consciousness, it is simply consciousness asleep, in-gathered, entranced. And this nether consciousness is, after all, one with the supreme Consciousness. It is itself the best weapon to bring about its own transformation. Not only the higher self, but the lower self too must be salvaged and saved by its own self—*ātmanā ātmānam uddharet*.

## (2)

The Divine brings down with himself his shaft of light, and the light, as it spreads, begins to scatter and dissolve the clouds of ignorance. The Divine comes here below and as he formulates and concentrates his consciousness in or as an individualised channel, the power of the consciousness becomes dynamic and concrete and works out the desired change in the material plane. In the descent the Divine has to assume the lower potentials on the inferior levels and this involves an apparent veiling and lessening of his higher and divine degrees. In other words, the Divine in becoming human accepts and embraces in that embodiment all that humanity normally means, its weaknesses and frailties, its obstacles and

difficulties, all the ignorance and inconstancy. This sacrifice he has agreed to, has undertaken in order to create out of it a golden body, a radiant matter, a heavenly or divinised earth.

God made man, the spirit become flesh: this is Grace, the benediction of the Holy One upon the sinful earth. The working of Grace in one of its characteristic movements has been beautifully envisaged in esoteric Christianity. The burden of sin—that is to say, of weakness, impurity and ignorance—lies so heavy upon man, the force of gravitation is so absolute, that it is divine intervention alone, and in the most physical sense, which can save him. God takes upon himself man's load and relieves him of it: thus freed he can soar up easily and join the company of the Happy in heaven alongside God. This is the ransom paid by God to His Enemy, the vicarious atonement suffered by the Divine, the cross he has to bear when he comes upon this earth, into this vale of tears. It is said, in terms of human feeling, pity so moved him that he left the happy abode of heaven, came down among men and lived like one of them, sharing their sorrow and pain and, what is divine, taking up the evil into himself, drinking, as it were, out of the poisoned bowl, so that man, frail mortal creature, may escape his doom.

This way too, as all other ways, has indeed been the way of escape. God came down in order to take away some men with him. They were the blessed ones, but the normal humanity remains as it is, as it has been,

on the whole. The few that pass beyond do not seem to leave any trace here below. There was no regeneration of mankind, no reformation of earthly life.

Sri Aurobindo aims at a power of consciousness, a formulation of the divine being that is integral. It takes up the whole man and it embraces all men: it works on a cosmic scale individually and collectively. That force of consciousness identifies itself with each and every individual being in all its parts and limbs; establishing itself in and working through their normal and habitual functionings, it moulds and refashions the earthly vessel. It is a global power, first of all, because it is the supreme creative Power, the original energy of consciousness that brought out this manifested universe, the matrix or the nodus that holds together and in an inviolable unity and harmony the fundamental truth-aspects of the one and indivisible Reality. This luminous source and substance of all created things consists of their basic true truths which assume disguised and deformed appearances under the present conditions of the world. It is therefore, in the second instance, the secret power in created things which manifests in them as the evolutionary urge, which drives them to rediscover their reality and re-form the appearance as the direct expression and embodiment of this inner soul.

The Divine incarnates, as an individual in the concrete material-actuality, this double aspect of the utter truth and reality. There are, what may be called, intermediary incarnations, some representing powers—aspects of the



Divine—in the higher mental or overmental levels of consciousness, others those of the inner heart, yet others again those of the dynamic vital consciousness. But the integral Divine, he who unites and reconciles in his body the highest height and the lowest depth, who has effectuated in him something like the “marriage of Heaven and Hell” is an event of the future—even perhaps of the immediate future. The descent into hell is an image that has been made very familiar to man, but all its implications have not been sounded. For what we were made familiar with was more or less an image of hell, not hell itself, a region or experience in the vital (may be even in the mental): real hell is not the mass of desires or weaknesses of the flesh, not “living flesh”, but dead Matter whose other name is Inconscience. In the older disciplines the central or key truth, the heart of reality where the higher and the lower—Brahman and Maya, the Absolute and the Contingency, the One and the Many, God and the World—met and united in harmony was by-passed: one shot from below right into the supreme Absolute; the matrix of truth-creation was ignored. Even so, at the other end, the reality of brute matter was not given sufficient weight, the spiritual light deisdained to reach it (*vijigupsate*).

The integral Divine not merely suffers (as in the Christian tradition) a body material, He accepts it in his supernal delight, for it is his own being and substance: it is He in essence and it will become He in actuality. When he comes into the world, it is not as though it

were a foreign country; he comes to his own,—only he seeks to rebuild it on another scale, the scale of unity and infinity, instead of the present scale of separativism and finiteness. He comes among men not simply because he is moved by human miseries; he is no extra-terrestrial person, a bigger human being, but is himself this earth, this world, all these miseries; he is woven into the fabric of the universe, he is the warp and woof that constitute creation. It is not a mere movement of sympathy or benevolence that actuates him, it is a total and absolute identification that is the ground and motive of his activity. When he assumes the frame of mortality, it is not that something outside and totally incongruous is entering into him, it is part and parcel of himself, it is himself in one of his functions and phases. Consequently, his work in and upon the material world and life may be viewed as that of self-purification and self-illumination, self-discipline and self-realisation. Also, the horrors of material existence, being part of the cosmic play and portion of his infinity, naturally find shelter in the individual divine incarnation, are encompassed in his human embodiment. It is the energy of his own consciousness that brought out or developed even this erring earth from within it: that same energy is now available, stored up in the individual formation, for the recreation of that earth. The advent and acceptance of material existence meant, as a kind of necessity in a given scheme of divinê manifestation, the appearance and play of Evil, the negation of the very divinity. Absolute Con-

sciousness brought forth absolute unconsciousness—the inconscient—because of its own self-pressure, a play of an increasingly exclusive concentration and rigid objectivisation. That same consciousness repeats its story in the individual incarnation: it plunges into the material life and matter and identifies itself with Evil. But it is then like a pressed or tightened spring; it works at its highest potential. In other words, the Divine in the body now works to divinise the body itself, to make of the negation a concrete affirmation. The inconscient will be embodied consciousness.

The humanist said, "Nothing human I reckon foreign to me." In a deeper and more absolute sense the divine Mystic of the integral Yoga says the same. He is indeed humanity incarnate, the whole mankind condensed and epitomised in his single body. Mankind as embedded in ignorance and inconscience, the conscious soul lost in the dark depths of dead matter, is he and his whole labour consists in working in and through that obscure "gravitational" mass, to evoke and bring down the totality of the superconscient force, the creative delight which he is essentially in his inmost and topmost being. The labour within himself is conterminous with the cosmic labour, and the change effected in his being and nature means a parallel change in the world outside, at least a ready possibility of the change. All the pains and weaknesses normal humanity suffers from, the heritage of an inconscient earthly existence, the Divine takes into his incarnated body—all and more and to the highest degree—into a crucible

as it were, and works out there the alchemy. The natural man individually shares also each other's burden in some way, for all are interconnected in life—action at one point has a reaction at all other points: only the sharing is done unconsciously and is suffered or imposed than accepted and it tends to be at a minimum. An ordinary mortal would break under a greater pressure. It is the Avatar who comes forward and carries on his shoulders the entire burden of earthly inconscience.

Suffering, incapacity and death are, it is said, the wages of earthly life; but they are, in fact, reverse aspects of divine truths. Whatever is here below has its divine counterpart above. What appears as matter, inertia, static existence here below is the devolution of pure Existence, Being or Substance up there. Life-force, vital dynamism here is the energy of Consciousness there. The pleasure of the heart and emotions and enjoyment is divine Delight. Finally, our mind with its half-lighted thinking power, its groping after knowledge has at its back the plenary light of the Supermind. So the aim is not to reject or withdraw from the material, vital and mental existence upon the earth and in this body, but house in them, make them concrete vehicles, expressions and embodiments of what they really are.

Pain and suffering, disease and incapacity, even age and death are fortuitous auxiliaries; they have come upon us simply because of the small and partial scale of our life to which we agreed. One can live here below, live a full life, upon a larger scale, upon the scale of infinity

and eternity. That need not dissolve body and life and mind, the triple ranges that make up our earthly existence. In brief, man himself is not truly man, he is the reverse aspect of God; and when he becomes divine and remains not merely human, he but realises what he is truly and integrally himself.



### III

## BYPATHS OF SOUL'S JOURNEY

A POPULAR conundrum. Are the souls finite or infinite in number? Supposing they are finite, then a time is sure to come when there will be no more souls upon earth; for, as it is said, all souls are evolving and in the end will pass out of earthly life and get merged in their source, the Brahman, the absolute Reality. On the other hand, if they are infinite, then, since all of them cannot appear on earth at the same time, the number of human bodies that house the souls being limited (at the most, a few thousand millions, according to statisticians), what happens to those that are not embodied, where do they wait or what do they do in that period? Do all come down or embody in course of time? Will all have the chance, will it be needed for all to take a body and sojourn on earth? No doubt, there is a continual increase of population upon earth, does that mean that new souls are slowly coming away from the waiting list? Even then, the list cannot be exhausted, since it is infinite; so there is bound to be a very large number who would not get the chance of visiting the earth. For, however much the population increases, it cannot increase to infinity. It can do so only if the world continues to exist eternally and humanity too. But both science and religion say that the world will come to an end some time. There is a *pralaya*—an extinction—although it may be

followed by a new creation and a new cycle of growth and evolution, but of a different kind and constituting quite other elements.

I have put the popular case in figures of popular mentality;—almost foolish and childish on the face of it, as it would appear; but if one tries to answer, one finds it is not easy, children's questions are always so. Let us then try to be wise and face the problem squarely. The whole difficulty comes from the popular, perhaps normal human conception of the soul; it is considered almost something like the physical body (even as Virochana of old did in the Upanishadic days), namely, it has a definite form and figure, even perhaps a definite mass: each is an isolated entity shut out from every one else by a fixed contour within which each one is housed. In fact, however, it is not so. The soul is an individual, no doubt, it has even a kind of recognisable form, but nothing of the kind by which matter or a material body is characterised. It is an essential form, form of the form, *swarūpa*; it is a basic or typical individuality, the individual seated within the individual. The characteristic of material individuality is, as I have said, exclusiveness, whereas the soul individuality is characterised by a comprehensiveness which does not diminish but gives a special mode and movement to that individuality. In the growth of life-forms, we know how a single unit, a cell, divides and subdivides itself and each division grows into a whole, a complete life-form. But the process is not reversible. Developed forms, coming out of a single parent cannot be resolved back into the original

unit. Organisms do not combine to form a single unitary organism, although one or more may be taken up and assimilated into another: for this is not combination, but practically the annihilation of one into another. The second law of thermodynamics seems to hold good even in the biological field. On a still higher or deeper level, in the psychological and spiritual realm, such combinations or resolutions are however possible and form a characteristic movement of the occult world.

Let us repeat here what we have often said elsewhere. The creation and development of souls is a twofold process. First, there is the process of growth from below, and secondly there is the process of manifestation or expression from above, the movements of ascent and descent, as spoken of by Sri Aurobindo. The souls start on their evolutionary journey on the material plane as infinitesimal specks of consciousness embedded in the vast expanse of the Inconscient; but they are parts and parcels of a homogenous mass: in fact they are not distinguishable from each other at that level. There is as it were a secret vibration of consciousness with which the material infinity all around is shot through. With evolution, that is to say, with the growth and coming forward of the consciousness, there arise sparks, glowing centres here and there, forms shape and isolate themselves in the bosom of the original formless mass; they rise and they subside, others rise, coalesce, separate—some grow, others disappear. These sparks or centres, as they develop or evolve, slowly assume definiteness,—of form and function,—attain

an individuality and finally a personality. Looked at from below there is no counting of these sparks or rudimentary souls; they are innumerable and infinitely variable. It is something like the nebula out of which the galaxies are supposed to be formed. The line of descent, however, presents a different aspect. Looked from above, at the summit there is the infinite supreme Being and Consciousness and Bliss (Sachchidananda) and in it too there cannot be a limit to the number of Jivatmas that are its formulations, like the waves in the bosom of the sea, according to the familiar figure. This is the counterpart of the infinity at the other end, where also the rudimentary souls or potential individualities are infinite. Moving down along the line of descent at a certain stage, under a certain modality of the creative process, certain types or fundamental formations are put forward that give the ground-plan, embody the matrix of the subsequent creation or manifestation. The Four Great Personalities (Chaturvyuha), the Seven Seers, the Fourteen Manus or Human Ancestors point to the truth of a fixed number of archetypes that are the source and origin of emanations forming in the end the texture of earthly lives and existences. The number and scheme depends upon a given purpose in view and is not an eternal constant. The types and archetypes with which we, human beings, are concerned in the present cycle of evolution belong to the supramental and overmental planes of consciousness; they are the beings known familiarly as gods and persiding deities. They too have emanations, each one of them, and these

emanations multiply as they come down the scale of manifestation to lower and lower levels, the mental, the vital and the physical, for example. And they enter into human embodiments, the souls evolving and ascending from the lower end; they may even take upon themselves human character and shape.

There are thus chains linking the typal beings in the world above with their human embodiments in the physical world; an archetype in the series of emanations branches out, as it were, into its commensurables and cognates in human bodies. Hence it is quite natural that many persons, human embodiments, may have so to say one common ancestor in the typal being (that gives their spiritual *gotra*); they all belong to the same geneological tree. Souls aspiring and ascending to the higher and fuller consciousness, because of their affinity, because together they have to fulfil a special role, serve a particular purpose in the cosmic plan, because of their spiritual consanguinity, call on the same godhead as their Master-soul or Over-soul, the Soul of their souls. Their growth and development are along similar or parallel lines, they are moulded and shaped in the pattern set by the original being. This must not be understood to mean that a soul is bound exclusively to its own family and cannot step out of its geneological system. As I have said in the beginning, souls are not material particles hard and rigid and shut out from each other, they are not obliged to obey the law of impenetrability that two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time. They meet, touch, interchange, inter-



penetrate, even coalesce, although they may not belong to the same family but follow different lines of evolution. Apart from the fact that in the ultimate reality each is in all and all is in each, not only so, each is all and all is each—thus beings on no account can be kept in water-tight compartments—apart from this spiritual truth, there is also a more normal and apparent give and take between souls. The phenomenon known as “possession”, for example, is a case in point. “Possession”, however, need not be always a ghostly possession in the modern sense of the possession by evil spirits, it may be also in a good sense, the sense that the word carried among mediaeval mystics viz., spiritual.

We say commonly souls are immortal. But in an occult sense souls are or may be mortal too. When the Vedantin speaks of *laya* or the Buddhist of *Shunya*, what else is it? It is nothing but the annihilation of the soul, even if it is in the Brahman or some Absolute. But we are not referring to that here. There is a merger of souls, and a dissolution of souls in a somewhat different manner, not on the highest metaphysical heights, but even here below among the growing developing souls embodied upon earth. That is to say, one soul may unite with another and both form one single entity and embodiment.

This perhaps is not the general rule, especially on the higher levels, where the beings possess well developed and well organised individual personalities. It is more common in the earlier stages when the souls are just developing and are pliant and supple and can

easily intermingle. But even on the higher reaches a merger is possible and does happen, when some special work has to be done. A god sometimes literally descends into a man, takes up the human soul within himself and becomes the man, transformed and transfigured, even as an Asura also may do the same thing. And human beings too on high altitudes of spiritual growth, major souls, can combine and fuse together to form a single soul—such may be the demand of their individual lines of growth or the demand of a Higher Will and Purpose.

Reverting to the original question with which we started, we can say now that the birth of a soul is not like the birth of a living being or organism, that is to say, it does not happen at a given point of time. A soul is truly *ajā*, unborn; it was always there embedded as the element of secret consciousness in the bosom of the inconscient material Nature. Only it grew out, manifested itself, attaining gradually an individuality and an integrated personality. Neither can it be said that all souls originally, that is to say, at the very beginning of their evolutionary course, were of the same magnitude, equal in all respects. As we know the ultimate material particles—the atoms of the different elements or their constituents, protons, etc.—have not all the same mass or charge, even so the spiritual elements too have not the same potency or vibration: they are of varying sizes and strengths. The stress of the evolutionary urge in life expressed itself in multiple and varied figures and dispositions, variation being an inherent virtue of the

stress. And the development too follows a chequered line: the direction, the tempo, the degree, the manner of the march all differ according to the case, each spark is or tends to be unique and *sui generis*—and even erratic perhaps—in its behaviour, like its physical counterpart, the indeterminate and indeterminable material particle. And yet all move towards a heightening, enlarging, deepening of the consciousness—rivers flowing and broadening out in their meandering course to the sea: what was unformed, rudimentary, scarcely distinguishable from out of a homogenous mass, detaches itself gradually, shapes itself into an organised individual entity and finally the fully conscious personality. But, as I have said, the growth does not follow a single one-track straight line: there can be a fusion of souls, the descent and integration of a being or soul from another level of consciousness into a developing soul or psychic element from out of Nature. In this sense then there can be a birth of souls too. The astronomers speak of *novae*, new stars that suddenly flare out in the sky, as if from nowhere—even though they or their elements were existent before the phenomenon happened. Souls too can come to birth in an analogous way. That is to say, it is due to a special descent of a formed being or consciousness into the human vehicle. The conception of the “twice-born caste” may be remembered in this connection. There is a physical birth and there is a spiritual birth: the latter takes place when the being on the physical plane, yet wholly belonging to evolving Nature, suddenly (it usually happens suddenly)

opens and receives into itself a higher principle and becomes a conscious personality.

The soul in Nature grows along a definite line and the descent also of higher principles overarching that soul happens also in the same line connecting it with its archetype in the supreme status. This we may call the major line of development through various avatars one after another: but apart from this there may also be subsidiary formations that are its emanations or are added to it from elsewhere either temporarily or even permanently. The soul can put out derivative or ancillary emanations, parts of its being and consciousness, a mental or vital or even a subtle physical movement or formation which can take a body creating a temporary, a transient personality or enter into another's body and another personality in order to go through a necessary experience and gather an element needed for the growth of its being and consciousness. One can recall here the famous story of Shankaracharya who entered into the body of a king (just dead, made him alive and lead the life of the king) in order to experience love and enjoyment, things of which, being a Sannyasi, he was innocent. Similarly one can take into oneself such parts and elements from others which he wishes to utilise for his growth and evolution. It is said that a man with low carnal instincts and impulses becomes an animal of that type in his next life. But perhaps it is truer to say that a part only—the vital part of animal appetite—enters into or takes shape in an animal: the soul itself, the true or the whole being of the person, once become human,

does not revert to animalhood. The animal portion in man that refuses to be taken up and integrated, sublimated into the higher human consciousness has to be satisfied and exhausted, as much as possible, in the animal way.

There is also the other question asked very often whether men and women always follow different lines of growth or whether there may be intermixture of the lines. Although the soul is sexless, still it may be said that on the whole there are these two lines, masculine and feminine; and generally a soul follows the same line in its incarnations. The soul difference is not in the sex as we know it; but there is a disposition and character that mark the difference and each type, masculine or feminine, is that because of some special role to fulfil, a particular kind of work to be done in a particular way. The difference is difficult to define exactly; but one may say, in the language of the mystics, that it is the difference between the left hand and the right hand. The mystics refer to the two sides of consciousness, that of light and that of force (*chit-tapas*), that is to say, knowledge and power. It is not that the two are quite separate entities, they are together and grow together; but in actuality one aspect is more in front than the other. The masculine aspect is often termed as the right hand and the feminine as the left hand of the conscious being. And in a general way man represents the knowledge aspect—the conceptual dynamism—and woman represents the executive dynamism. This definition however should not be taken



absolutely or rigidly. So it can be said that a woman generally remains a woman in all her births and man likewise remains a man. Here too, although there may not be a central metamorphosis, there may be a partial change: that is to say a part of a man—too womanish, so to say—may enter a woman and live and fulfil itself or exhaust there; and the masculine part of a woman also can identify itself with its type and pattern in a man. The difference, however, between Purusha and Prakriti, philosophically, seems to be very definite and clear; but in actuality, when they take form and embodiment, it is not easy to define the principles or qualities that mark out the two. At the source when the difference starts, it is a matter of stress and temper and not any so-called division of labour as human mind ordinarily understands it.

The soul in its inner consciousness knows all its evolutionary formations, remembers those of the past and foresees those of the future, when needed, and even determines them essentially. The mind ruling one incarnation cannot recall other incarnations, for it is a product of that incarnation and is meant to guide and control it; physical memory is a function of the brain in the particular body that the soul inhabits for the time. The soul carries a deeper reminiscence which is part and parcel of the self-consciousness inherent in its nature. The physical memory too can partake of this inner reminiscence if it is purified, illumined and organised around the soul as its instrument of expression.

Indeed, although the journey of the soul essentially and originally is the flight of the spirit to the Spirit, yet the final consummation is towards an increasing integration of all the external instruments from the highest to the lowest, from the subtlest to the grossest into a harmonised organised whole, reflecting and embodying the Spirit in its purity and totality. The mind, the life and the body too attain a perfectly unified individuality that is the expression of the soul's truth-consciousness and escaping disruption and dissolution partake ultimately of the inherent immortality of the spiritual being.

## IV

### THE IMMORTAL PERSON

THE whole purpose of man's life upon earth, it may be said, is to make an individuality of himself and to grow in that individuality and organise it perfectly.

An ordinary man is a most disorganised entity and possesses no individual character. His mind is a conglomeration of thoughts and ideas which do not particularly belong to him, but to everybody, being elements of the world-mind in general. His vital being too is a medley of desires, impulses, energies that are not personal in any sense, but pass through him or take a long or short-term asylum in him from the universal vital force. The body, being a definitely delimited object, is perhaps the only thing that appears to be personal—the chief, if not the only source and sign of personal identity; and with the loss of the body, the whole personality seems to crumble down and disappear in the world-existence—the body particles get mixed into the world of matter, the life elements disperse in the vital world, the mental components disintegrate into the world of mind. In fact, this is what happens to the human person after death or would happen normally.

Thus man, the ordinary or "natural" man, has no personality, no real individuality. It is just like a wave-formation out of universal nature, moving in and being

moved by the total swell and heave, being formed and being destroyed every moment—as the poet says:

They take birth in you and they dissolve in you like  
the waves in the sea.

And yet the building up of an abiding individual is the secret urge of Nature's evolution: it is the hidden spring of human aspiration and the purpose of God's creation. Not mere disparate particles—of substance or energy or consciousness—breaking up constantly and scattering and finally dissolving into the void (the great law of *Running Down* or as the Veda figures it, *tucchyena ab-wapihitam* absorbed by the infinitesimal)—but a gathering of elements, integrating them into organic wholes, moulding definite forces into definite forms—such is the secret plan behind. Indeed, ego is the first formation, the original instrument which Nature fashioned to carry out this object of hers.

Ego means a hardened core that is not easily broken by the impact of forces. It delimits, cuts out, endeavours to maintain its formation by a strong violent self-assertion. Ego is a helper, but also it is a bar. It assists the first formation but delays and obstructs the true and final formation. For the ego is a formation, an individual formation, but on the level of universal Nature: it is of a piece with the normal cosmic movement, only bounded by a peripheral line. In the general expanse it puts up enclosures and preserves and fencings; the constituting elements remaining the same in substance and quality.

Even the delimitation is illusory in reality, it is something like the membrane in the body separating the different functional organs, rigid yet allowing interaction and interpenetration. It is why when death removes the outward fencing, the individuality also cannot long maintain itself and merges into the general. We may look upon egoism as a kind of artificial or experimental individuality, a laboratory formation, as it were, tried and developed under given conditions. In fact, however, egoism is a shadow or an echo upon this side of our nature of the true individuality which lies and comes from elsewhere.

And that is the soul of the man. We have spoken of the body, the life and the mind of the individual, but beside and beyond these elements which are only instruments there is this secret master and overlord. It is the particle of divinity in each, the developing consciousness—the spark of Fire, the ray of Light—"the immortal in the mortal no bigger than one's thumb." The soul is an individual, an individual formation of the divine reality: it is a godhead formulating an aspect or function of God. We may thus say that the whole purpose of earthly evolution is the evolution of this soul-formation, that is to say, its growing individualisation in light and power, in the expression of the godhead. This growth is first in itself and of itself, its inherent being and consciousness; then, the growth is that of its instrumentation, in other words, the development and organisation of the mind, the life and the body.



So the individualisation and growth of the soul means a growth and individualisation of the mental being, the vital being and also of the physical being. Normally the purpose of intellectual culture is the growth and individualisation of the mind, the purpose of moral culture is the growth and individualisation of the vital being and the true purpose of physical culture too should be a well-balanced and well-developed physical body, not only in a general sense, but in a very individualised mode. But all these varieties and modes of culture can be truly individualised and not merely ordered or organised, more or less on the surface, only when they obey and subserve the culture of the soul. The mind, the vital and the physical each has to grow its individuality in the growing individuality of the soul. The soul, otherwise called the psychic being, is man's spiritual being: the growth of the spiritual being means the advent and establishment of the true personality.

There is, of course, a spiritual path that turns the soul away from its instruments and demands that it should concentrate exclusively upon itself, upon its essential essence, upon its transcendent existence; but that is not our path and, according to us, that is only a temporary phase, an intermediate necessity for some persons and at certain stages.

The individualisation of the mind, its organisation as a special formation, as a vehicle of the true light, the light of the Psychic consciousness is comparatively easy for a man. Mind is the first member of the lower sphere that

is taken up and dealt with by the soul; for it is the highest and the most characteristic element in man and less dense and less subject to the darkness inherent in human nature. The mental individual persists the longest after the dissolution of the body, it survives and may survive very long the disruption of the vital being. This vital being is next in the rung to be taken up, organised and individualised by and around the psychic being. The organisation of the vital being in view of a particular object or aim in ordinary life is common enough: the purpose is limited, the scope restricted. Great men of action have done it and one has to do it more or less to be successful in life. This, however, may be called organisation; it is not individualisation in the true sense, much less personalisation. A limb is individualised, personalised only when it is an instrument and formation of the soul consciousness, the psychic being. And the vital is not easily amenable to such a role. For, it is the dynamic element, the effective power of life and it has acquired a strong nature and a definite function in its earthly relations. Naturally, there is a secret drive and an occult inspiration behind over-riding or guiding all immediate and apparent forces and happenings: in and through these the shape of things to come is being built up. In the meanwhile, however, actually the vital is an executive agent of the lower consciousness: it is an anonymous force of universal nature canalised into a temporary figure that is the normal individual man. The individualisation of the vital being would mean an

immortal formulation of an immortal soul as energy consciousness with a specific role for the Divine to play. It maintains its identity, its personality independent of the vicissitudes of the physical body: it continues to function as a divine being, a godhead, to work for mankind and the world. The popular legend has imaged this phenomenon in the mystic figure of an immortal Aswatthama and Vibhishana still wandering in earth's atmosphere.

Finally, it is the turn of the body to become individualised, personalised, that is to say, when it takes up the *disposition* and *configuration* of the psychic person and individual. The first stage is that of a subtle body individualised, a radiant form of etherealised elements consisting of the concentrated light particles of the divine consciousness of the Psyche. This too is an immortalisation of the personal identity which can be achieved and is achieved by the gnostic man who is to come, who will wholly psychicise and divinise his personality. The second stage is the reorganisation and individualisation of the material sheath itself. The very cells of the body are impregnated with the radiant substance of the supreme spiritual consciousness; they live the life of the spiritual individual, the personal divine embodied in the individual. When the whole process is gone through and the work done, the individual body, physically too, shares in and attains the immortality of the soul. The body is firm enough to maintain its physical identity and yet plastic enough to change in the manner and to the degree demanded of it at any time.

In the process of making the body personal and divine and immortal, death or what appears as such may be a needed operation. It is no longer an ineluctable destiny forced upon you, but an instrument which you use consciously for a definite purpose. It is a mystic or occult work (*kriyā*) which we can try to understand by an analogy. The evolution of the ideal or divine man, the assumption of the mortal by the immortal involves a twofold operation: rejection and integration. Rejection means throwing out the elements that belong exclusively to the lower grade and cannot be taken up and incorporated into the higher; while integration means taking up and absorbing utilisable elements of the lower into the higher. This double process goes on on all the levels, on the mental, on the vital, on the subtle physical and even on the physical level. At a certain stage or in a concentrated process of alchemy the process of rejection may demand a mode of reshuffling and re-disposition which physically appears like death, but it is inevitably followed or accompanied by the process of integration or recreation.

Perhaps this supreme and dangerous gesture only the Master can make—as the pioneer and pathfinder—and he has made it.

## *Section Two*

## IN QUEST OF REALITY

THIS is, they say, the age of Positivism—no mystic obfuscation, but clear light in the open sun. Let us enquire a little into the nature of this modern illumination.

Positivists are those who swear by facts. Facts to them mean naturally facts attested in the end by sense-experience. To a positivist the only question that matters and that needs to be answered and can be answered is whether a thing *is* or *is not* physically: other questions are otiose, irrelevant, misleading. So problems of the Good, of the Beautiful, of God are meaningless. When one says this is good, that is bad, well, it is a proposition that cannot be related to any fact, it is a subjective personal valuation. In the objective world a thing simply is or is not, one cannot say it is good or it is bad. The thing called good by one is called bad by another, the same thing that is good to you now will appear bad at another time. This is a region absolutely of personal and variable idiosyncrasy. The same with regard to the concept of beauty. That a thing is beautiful or ugly is a subjective judgment; it is not and cannot be an objective statement. Beauty is a formula in your mind and imagination, it is a changing mode of your apprehension. The concept of God too fares no better. God exists: it is a judgment based upon no fact or facts of sense-experience. However we may analyse it, it is found to have no direct or even indirect



but inevitable *rapprochement* with the field of actual reality. There is between the two an unbridgeable hiatus. This is a position restated in a modern style, familiar to the Kantian Critique of Pure Reason.

There are two ways of facing the problem. First, the Kantian way which cuts the Gordian knot. We say here that there are two realms in which man lives, but they are incommensurables: the truths and categories of one cannot be judged and tested by those of the other. Each is *sui generis*, each is valid in its own right, in its own dominion. God, Soul, Immortality—these are realities belonging to one section of our nature, seizable by a faculty other than the Pure Reason, viz., the Practical Reason; while the realities given by the senses and the judgments of the logical mind are of another section. It may be said one is physical, the other metaphysical. The positivists limit their field of enquiry and knowledge to the physical: they seek to keep the other domain quite apart as something imaginary, illusory, often unnecessary and not unoften harmful to true human interest.

To a more detached and impartial view this may appear very much like the ostrich-policy. If a thing really exists, one cannot negate it by simply closing one's eyes. This involves a dichotomy which the logical mind may like to impose and live by, but man cannot be thus artificially segmented. And if both the worlds are found in him both have to be accepted and if they are found together, there must be some sort of commensurability between the two.

Indeed the second way of approach to the problem is the positivist's own way. That is to say, let us take our stand on the *terra ferma* of the physical and probe into it and find out whether there are facts there which open the way or point to the other side of nature, whether there are signs, hints, intimations, factors involved there that lead to conclusions, if not inevitable, at least conformable to supraphysical truths. It is usually asserted, for example, that the scientist—the positivist par excellence—follows a rigid process of ratiocination, of observation, analysis and judgment. He collects facts and a sufficient number of them made to yield a general law—the probability of a generic fact—which is tested or exemplified by other correlate facts. This is however an ideal, a theoretical programme not borne out by actual practice, it is a rationalisation of a somewhat different actuality. The scientist, even the most hard-headed among them, the mathematician, finds his laws often and perhaps usually not by a long process of observation and induction or deduction, but all on a sudden, in a flash of illumination. The famous story of Newton and the falling apple, Kepler's happy guess of the elliptical orbit of the planets—and a host of examples can be cited as rather the rule than the exception for the methodology of scientific discovery. Prof. Hadamard, the great French mathematician,—the French are well-known for their intransigent, logical and rational attitude in Science,—has been compelled to admit the supreme role of an intuitive faculty in scientific enquiry. If it is argued that the so-called

sudden intuition is nothing but the final outburst, the cumulative resultant of a long strenuous travail of thinking and reasoning and arguing, Prof. Hadamard says, in reply, that it does not often seem to be so, for the answer or solution that is suddenly found does not lie in the direction of or in conformity with the conscious rational research but goes against it and its implications.

This faculty of direct knowledge, however, is not such a rare thing as it may appear to be. Indeed if we step outside the circumscribed limits of pure science instances crowd upon us, even in our normal life, which would compel one to conclude that the rational and sensory process is only a fringe and a very small part of a much greater and wider form of knowing. Poets and artists, we all know, are familiar only with that form: without intuition and inspiration they are nothing. Apart from that, modern enquiries and observations have established beyond doubt certain facts of extra-sensory, supra-rational perception—of clairvoyance and clair-audience, of prophecy, of vision into the future as well as into the past. Not only these unorthodox faculties of knowledge, but dynamic powers that almost negate or flout the usual laws of science have been demonstrated to exist and can be and are used by man. The Indian yogic discipline speaks of the eight *siddhis*, supernatural powers attained by the Yogi when he learns to control nature by the force of his consciousness. Once upon a time these facts were challenged as facts in the scientific world, but it is too late now in the day to deny

them their right of existence. Only Science, to maintain its scientific prestige, usually tries to explain such phenomena in the material way, but with no great success. In the end she seems to say these freaks do not come within her purview and she is not concerned with them. However, that is not for us also the subject for discussion for the moment.

The first point then we seek to make out is that even from a rigid positivist stand a form of knowledge that is not strictly positivist has to be accepted. Next, if we come to the content of the knowledge that is being gained it is found one is being slowly and inevitably led into a world which is also hardly positivistic. We have in our study of the physical world come in close contact with two disconcerting facts or two ends of one fact—the infinitely small and the infinitely large. They have disturbed considerably the normal view of things, the view that dominated Science till yesterday. The laws that hold good for the ordinary sensible magnitudes fail totally in the case of the infinite magnitudes (whether big or small). In the infinite we begin squaring the circle.

Take for instance, the romantic story of the *mass* of a body. Mass, at one time, was considered as one of the fundamental constants of nature: it meant a fixed quantity of substance inherent in a body, it was an absolute quality. Now we have discovered that this is not so; the mass of a body varies with its speed and an object with infinite speed has an infinite mass—theoretically at least it should be so. A particle of matter moving with the speed of light

must be terribly massive. But—*mirable dictu!* —a photon has no mass (practically none). In other words, a material particle when it is to be most material—exactly at the critical temperature, as it were—is dematerialised. How does the miracle happen?

In fact, we are forced to the conclusion that the picture of a solid massive material nature is only a mask of the reality; the reality is that matter is a charge of electricity and the charge of electricity is potentially a mode of light. The ancient distinction between matter and energy is no longer valid. In fact energy is the sole reality, matter is only an appearance that energy puts on under a certain condition. And this energy too is not mechanical (and Newtonian) but radiant and *ethereal*. We can no longer regret with the poet:

‘They have gone into the world of light’

for, we all are come into a world of light and we ourselves, the elements of our physical frame are made of the very texture of light.

So far so good. But it is evidently not far enough. for one can answer that all this falls within the dominion of Matter and the material. The conception of Matter has changed, to be sure: Matter and energy are identified, as we have said, and the energy in its essential and significant form is light (which, we may say, is electricity at its highest potential). But this does not make any fundamental change in the metaphysical view of the reality.

We have to declare in the famous French phrase "Plus ça change plus ça reste le même" (the more it changes the more it remains the same). The reality remains material: for light, physical light is not something spiritual or even immaterial.

Well, let us proceed a little further. Admitted the universe is a physical substance (although essentially of the nature of light—admitted light is a physical substance, obeying the law of gravitation, as Einstein has demonstrated). Does it then mean that the physical universe is after all a dead inert insentient thing, that whatever the vagaries of the ultimate particles composing the universe, their structure, their disposition is more or less strictly geometrical (that is to say, mechanical) and their erratic movement is only the errantry of a throw of dice—a play of possibilities? There is nothing even remotely conscious or purposive in this field.

Let us leave the domain, the domain of inorganic matter for a while and turn to another set of facts, those of organic matter, of life and its manifestation. The biological domain is a freak in the midst of what appears to be a rigidly mechanistic material universe. The laws of life are not the laws of matter, very often one contravenes the other. The two converging lenses of the two eyes do not make the image twice brighter than the one produced by a single lens. What is this alchemy that forms the equation  $1^2=1$  (we might as well put it as  $1+1=1$ )? Again, a living whole—a cell—fissured and divided tends to live and grow *wholly* in each fragment. In life.



we have thus another strange equation: part=whole (although in the mathematics of infinity such an equation is a normal phenomenon). The body (of a warm-blooded animal) maintaining a constant temperature whether it is at the Pole or at the Equator is a standing miracle which baffles mere physics and chemistry. Thirdly, life is immortal—the law of entropy (of irrevocably diminishing energy) that governs the fate of matter does not seem to hold good here. The original life-cells are carried over physically from generation to generation and there is no end to the continuity of the series, if allowed to run its normal course. Material energy also, it is said, is indestructible; it is never destroyed, but changes form only. But the scientific conception of material energy puts a limit to its course, it proceeds, if we are to believe thermodynamics, towards a dead equilibrium—there is no such thing as “perpetual movement” in the field of matter.

Again the very characteristic of life is its diversity, its infinite variety of norms and forms and movements. The content and movement of material nature is calculable to a great extent. A few mathematical equations or formulae can after all be made to cover all or most facts concerning it. But the laws of life refuse systematisation. A few laws purporting to govern the physical bases of life claim recognition, but they stand on precarious grounds. The laws of natural selection, of heredity or genetics are applicable within a very restricted frame of facts. The variety of material substances revolves

upon the gamut of 92 elements based upon 4 or 5 ultimate types of electric unit—and that is sufficient to make us wonder. But the variety in life-play is simply incalculable—from the amoeba or virus cell to man, what a bewildering kaleidoscope and each individual in each group is unique in its way! The few chromosomes that seem to be the basis of all diversity do not explain the mystery—the mystery becomes doubly mysterious: how does a tiny seed contain the thing that is to become a banyan tree, how does a speck of plasma bring forth from within an object of Hamletian dimensions! What then is this energy or substance of life welling out irrepressively into multitudinous forms and modes? The chemical elements composing an organic body do not wholly exhaust its composition; there is something else besides. At least in one field, the life element has received recognition and been given an independent name and existence. I am obviously referring to the life element in food-stuff which has been called *vitamin*.

Life looks out of matter as a green sprout in the midst of a desert expanse. But is matter really so very different and distinct from life? Does Matter mean no Life? Certain facts and experiments have thrown great doubt upon that assumption. An Indian, a scientist of the first order in the European and modern sense, has adduced proofs that obliterate the hard and fast line of demarcation between the living and the non-living. He has demonstrated the parallelism, if not the identity, of the responses of those two domains: we use the term fatigue in respect

of living organisms only, but Jagadishchandra Bose says and shows, that matter too, a piece of metal for instance, undergoes fatigue. Not only so, the graph, the periodicity of the reactions as shown by a living body under a heightened or diminished stimulus or the influence of poison or drug is repeated very closely by the so-called dead matter under the same treatment.

It will not be far from the truth, if it is asserted that matter is instinct with a secret life. And because there was life secreted within matter, therefore life could come out of matter; there is here no spontaneous generation, no arbitrary fiat nor a fortuitous chance. The whole creation is a mighty stir of life. That is how the ancient Rishi of the Upanishad puts it: Life stirred and all came out.

Now, let us advance another step forward. Beyond matter there lies life and beyond life—consciousness. Is consciousness too a mere epiphenomenon as life was once thought to be in the empire of matter? Or can it not be that consciousness is an extension—an evolute—of life, even as life is an extension, an evolute of matter? In other words consciousness is not a freak, even as life was not; it is inherent in life, life itself is a rudimentary movement of consciousness. The amoeba feeling or pre-sensing its way towards its food, the twig bending towards the direction in which it has the chance of getting more light, the sudden appearance of organs or elements in an organism that will be useful only in the future are indisputable examples of a purposiveness,

a forward reference in the scheme of Nature. In the domain of life-play teleology is a fact which only the grossest brand of obfuscation can deny. And teleology means—does it not?—the stress of an idea, the pattern of a consciousness.

Consciousness or thought in man, we know, is linked with the brain: and sentience which is the first step towards thought and consciousness is linked with the nervous system (of which the brain is an extension). Now the same Indian wizard who first, scientifically speaking, linked up the non-living with the living, has also demonstrated, if not absolutely, at least to a high degree of plausibility, that the plant also possesses a kind of rudimentary nervous system (although we accept more easily a respiratory system there). All this, however, one has to admit, is still a far cry from any intimation of consciousness in Matter. Yet if life is admitted to be involved in matter and consciousness is found to be involved in life, then the unavoidable conclusion is that Matter too must contain involved in it a form of consciousness. The real difficulty in the way of attributing consciousness to Matter is our conception of consciousness which we usually identify with articulate thought, intelligence or reason. But these are various formations of consciousness, which in itself is something else and can exist in many other forms and formulations.

One remarkable thing in the material world that has always attracted and captivated man's attention, since

almost the very dawn of his consciousness, is the existence of a pattern, of an artistic lay-out in the composition and movement of material things. When the Vedic Rishi sings out:

“These countless stars that appear glistening night after night, where do they vanish during the day?” he is awed by the inviolable rhythm of the Universe, which other sages in other climes sang as the music of the spheres. The presence of Design in Nature has been in the eyes of Believers an incontrovertible proof of the existence of a Designer. What we want to say is not that a watch (if we regard the universe as a watch) presupposes the existence of a watch-maker: we say the pattern itself is the expression of an idea, it involves a conception not imposed or projected from outside but inherent in itself. The Greek view of the artist’s mode of operation is very illuminating in this connection. The artist, according to this view, when he carves out a statue for example, does not impose upon the stone a figure that he has only in his mind, but that the stone itself contains the figure, the artist has the vision to see it, his chisel follows the lines he sees embedded in the stone. It is why we say that the geometry in the structure of a crystal or an atom or an astronomical system, the balance and harmony, the symmetry and polarity that govern the composition of objects and their relations, the blend of colour schemes, the marshalling of lines and the building of volumes, in a word, the artistic make-up, perfect in detail and in the en-

semble that characterise all nature's body and limbs and finally the mathematical laws that embrace and picture as it were Nature's movements, all point to the existence of a truth, a reality whose characteristic marks are or are very much like those of consciousness and Idea-Force. We fight shy of the word—consciousness—for it brings in a whole association of anthropomorphism and pathetic fallacy. But in our anxiety to avoid a ditch let us not fall over a precipice. If it is blindness to see nothing but the spirit, it is not vision to see nothing but Matter.

A hypothesis, however revolutionary or unorthodox it may seem for the moment, has to be tested by its effective application, in its successful working out. All scientific discoveries in the beginning appear as inconveniences that upset the known and accepted order. Copernicus, Newton, Galileo, Kepler, Maxwell or Einstein in our day enunciated principles that were not obvious sense-given axioms. These are at the outset more or less postulates that have to be judged by their applicability.

Creation as a movement or expression of consciousness need not be dubbed a metaphysical jargon; it can be assumed as a scientific working hypothesis and seen how it affects our view, meets our problems and difficulties, whether it can give a satisfactory clue to some of the riddles of physical and psychical phenomena. A scientific supposition (or intuition) is held to be true if it can be applied invariably to facts of life and experience and



if it can open up to our vision and perception new facts. The trend of scientific discoveries today is towards the positing of a background reality in Nature of which energy (radiant and electrical) is the first and overt form. We discarded *ether*, only to replace it by *field* and *disposition*. We have arrived at a point where the question is whether we cannot take courage in both hands and declare, as some have already done, that the substratum in Nature is consciousness-energy and on that hypothesis better explain certain movements of Matter and Life and Mind in a global unity. Orthodox and die-hard views will always protest and cry that it is a *mésalliance*, a misjoinder to couple together Matter and Consciousness or even Life and Consciousness. But since the light has touched the higher mind even among a few of the positivist type, the few may very well be the precursor of the order of the day.

After all, only one bold step is needed: to affirm unequivocally what is being suggested and implied and pointed to in a thousand indirect ways. And Science will be transformed. The scientist too, like the famous *Saltimbanque* (clown) of a French poet, may one day in turning a somersault, suddenly leap up and find himself rolling into the bosom of the stars.

## II

### PHYSICS OR PHILOSOPHY

WHAT is the world that we see really like? Is it mental, is it material? This is a question, we know, philosophers are familiar with, and they have answered and are still answering, each in his own way, taking up one side or other of the antinomy. There is nothing new or uncommon in that. The extraordinary novelty comes in when we see today even scientists forced to tackle the problem, give an answer to it,—scientists who used to smile at philosophers, because they seemed to assault seriously the windmills of abstract notions and airy concepts, instead of reposing on the *terra firma* of reality. The tables are turned now. The scientists have had to start the same business—the *terra firma* on which they stood as on the securest rock of ages is slipping away under their feet and fast vanishing into smoke and thin air. Not only that, it is discovered today that the scientist has always been a philosopher, without his knowledge—a crypto-philosopher,—only he has become conscious of it at last. And further—*mirabile dictu!*—many a scientist is busy demonstrating that the scientist is, in his essence, a philosopher of the Idealist school!

Physical Science in the nineteenth century did indeed develop or presuppose a philosophy of its own; it had, that is to say, a definite outlook on the fundamental quality of things and the nature of the universe. Those

were days of its youthful self-confidence and unbending assurance. The view was, as is well-known, materialistic and deterministic. That is to say, all observation and experiment, according to it, demonstrated and posited:

*First*, that this universe is made up of particles that push and pull each other, the particles having certain constant values, such as in respect of mass and volume.

*Secondly*, that the laws governing the relations among the particles, in other words, their push and pull, are laws of simple mechanics; they are fixed and definite and give us determinable and measurable quantities called co-ordinates—by which one can ascertain the pattern or configuration of things at a given moment and deduce from that the pattern or configuration of things at any other moment: the chain that hangs things together is fixed and uniform and continuous and is not broken anywhere.

The scientific view of things thus discovered or affirmed certain universal and immutable facts—axiomatic truths—which were called constants of Nature. These were the very basic foundations upon which the whole edifice of scientific knowledge was erected. The chief among them were: (1) conservation of matter, (2) conservation of energy, (3) uniformity of nature and (4) the chain of causality and continuity. Above all, there was the fundamental implication of an independent—an absolute—time and space in which all things existed and moved and had their being.

The whole business of experimental science was just to

find the absolutes of Nature, that is to say, facts and laws governing facts that do not depend for their existence upon anything but themselves. The purely objective world without any taint of an intruding subject was the field of its inquiry. In fact, the old-world or Medieval Science—there was a Science even then—could not develop properly, did not strike the right line of growth, precisely because it had a strong subjective bias: the human factor, the personal element of the observer or experimenter was unconsciously (at times even deliberately) introduced into the facts and explanations of Nature. The new departure of Modern Science consisted exactly in the elimination of this personal element and making observation and experiment absolutely impersonal and thoroughly objective.

Well, the old world spirit has had its revenge complete and absolute in a strange manner. We are coming to that presently. Now, the constants or absolutes of which we spoke, which were the bed-rock of Modern Science, were gradually found to be rather shaky—very inconstant and relative. Take, for example, the principle of conservation of matter. The principle posited that in a given system the quantity of matter is constant in and through all transformations. Modern Science has found out that this law holds good only in respect of gross matter belonging to man-size Nature. But as soon as we enter into the domain of the ultimate constituents of matter, the units of electric charges, the infinitesimals, we find that matter is destroyed and is or can be re-

created: material particles are dematerialised into light waves or quanta, and light quanta are precipitated back again into electric particles of matter. Similarly, the law of conservation of energy—that energy =  $\frac{1}{2} mv^2$  ( $m$  being mass,  $v$  velocity)—does not hold good in respect of particles that move with the speed of light: mass is not a constant as in Newtonian mechanics, but varies with velocity. Again, in classical mechanics, position and velocity are two absolute determinates for all scientific measurement, and Science after all is nothing if not a system of measurements. Now, in the normal size world, the two are easily determined; but in the sub-atomic world things are quite different; only one can be determined accurately; the more accurate the one, the less so the other; and if both are to be determined, it can be only approximatively, the closer the approximation, the hazier the measure, and the farther the approximation, the more definite the measure. That is to say, here we find not the exact measures of things, but only the probable measures. Indeed, not fixity and accuracy, but probability has become the central theme of modern physical calculation.

The principle of indeterminacy carries two revolutionary implications. First, that it is not possible to determine the movement of the ultimate particles of matter individually and severally, it is not possible even theoretically to follow up the chain of modulations of an electron from its birth to its dissolution (if such is the curve of its destiny), as Laplace considered it quite

possible for his super-mathematician. One cannot trace the complete evolution of each and every or even one particular particle, not because of a limitation in the human capacity, but because of an inherent impossibility in the nature of things. In radioactive substances, for example, there is no ground or data from which one can determine which particle will go off or not, whether it will go off the next moment or wait for a million years. It is mere chance that seems to reign here. In radiation too, there is no formula, and no formula can be framed for determining the course of a photon in relation to a half-reflecting surface, whether it will pass through or be reflected. In this field of infinitesimals what we know is the total behaviour of an assemblage of particles, and the laws of nature are only laws of average computation. Statistics has ousted the more exact and rigid arithmetics. And statistics, we know, is a precarious science: the knowledge it gives is contingent, contingent upon the particular way of arranging and classifying the data. However, the certainty of classical mechanistic knowledge is gone, gone too the principle of uniformity of nature.

The second element brought in in the indeterminacy picture is the restoration of the "subject" to its honoured or even more than the honoured place it had in the Mediaeval Ages, and from which it was pulled down by young arrogant Science. A fundamental question is now raised in the very methodology of the scientific apparatus. For Science, needless to say, is first and foremost observation. Now it is observed that the very fact of observa-



tion affects and changes the observed fact. The path of an electron, for example, has to be observed; one has then to throw a ray of light—hurl a photon—upon it: the impact is sufficient to deflect the electron from the original path. If it is suggested that by correction and computation, by a backward calculation we can deduce the previous position, that too is not possible. For we cannot fix any position or point that is not vitiated by the observer's interference. How to feel or note the consistency of a thing, if the touch itself, the temperature of the finger, were sufficient to change the consistency? The trouble is, as the popular Indian saying goes, the very amulet that is to exorcise the ghost is possessed by the ghost itself.

So the scientists of today are waking up to this disconcerting fact. And some have put the question very boldly and frankly: do not all laws of Nature contain this original sin of the observer's interference, indeed may not the laws be nothing else but that? Thus Science has landed into the very heart—the bog and quagmire, if you like—of abstruse metaphysics. Eddington says, there is no other go for Science today but to admit and declare that its scheme and pattern of things, as described by what is called laws of Nature, is only a mental construct of the Scientist. The “wonderful” discoveries are nothing but jugglery and legerdemain of the mind—what it puts out of itself unconsciously into the outside world, it recovers again and is astonished at the miracle. A scientific law is a pure deduction from the mind's own disposition.

Eddington goes so far as to say that if a scientist is sufficiently introspective he can trace out from within his brain each and every law of Nature which he took so much pains to fish out from Nature by observation and experiment. Eddington gives an analogy to explain the nature of scientific law and scientific discovery. Suppose you have a fishing net of a particular size and with interstices of a particular dimension; you throw it into the sea and pull out with fishes in it. Now you count and assort the fishes, and according to the data thus obtained, you declare that the entire sea consists of so many varieties of fish and of such sizes. The only error is that you could not take into account the smaller fishes that escaped through the interstices and the bigger ones that did not at all fall into the net. Scientific statistics is something of this kind. Our mind is the net, and the pattern of Nature is determined by the mind's own pattern.

Eddington gives us absolutely no hope for any knowledge of an objective world apart from the objectification of mind's own constructs. This is a position which a scientist, *qua* scientist, finds it difficult to maintain. Remedies and loop-holes have been suggested with what result we shall presently see.

Einstein's was, perhaps, the most radical and revolutionary solution ever proposed. Indeed, it meant the reversal of the whole scientific outlook, but something of the kind was an imperative need in order to save Science from inconsistencies that seemed to be inherent in it. The scientific outlook was vitiated, Einstein said, because

we started from wrong premises; two assumptions mainly were responsible for the bankruptcy which befell later-day Science. First, it was assumed that a push and pull—a force (a gravitational or, more generally, a causal force) existed and that acted upon isolated and independent particles strewn about; and secondly, they were strewn about in an independently existing time and an independently existing space. Einstein has demonstrated, it seems, successfully that there is no Time and no Space actually, but times and spaces (this reminds one of a parallel conception in Sankhya and Patanjali), that time is not independent of space (nor space of time) but that time is another co-ordinate or dimension necessary for all observation in addition to the three usual co-ordinates (or dimensions). This was the explanation he found of the famous Michelson-Morley experiment which failed to detect any difference in the velocity of light whether it moved with or against a moving object, which is an inconsistency according to the mechanistic view.<sup>1</sup> The absolute dependence of time and space upon each other was further demonstrated by the fact that it was absolutely impossible to synchronise two distant clocks (moving with different speeds and thus forming

<sup>1</sup> The constancy of the velocity of light, it must be noted, is not altogether an objective fact: it is a supposition by which Einstein tried to explain certain anomalies in previous theories. It is really, as some have pointed out (*e. g.* Hans Reichenbach—*Atom and Cosmos*—p. 136), a mental formula, part of a built-in structure, arbitrary to a certain extent which is so arranged that the speed becomes constant and equal for systems in different states of motion.

different systems) with perfect accuracy, or determine exactly whether two events happened simultaneously or not. In the final account of things, this relative element that varies according to varying particulars had to be eliminated, sublated. In order to make a law applicable to all fields—from the astronomical through the normal down to the microscopic or sub-atomic—in an equally valid manner, the law had to divest itself of all local colour. Thus, a scientific law became a sheer mathematical formula; it was no longer an objective law that governed the behaviour of things, but merely a mental rule or mnemonics to string together as many diverse things as possible in order to be able to memorise them easily.

Again, the generalised law of relativity (that is to say, laws governing all motions, even accelerated motion and not merely uniform motion) that sought to replace the laws of gravitation did away also with the concepts of force and causality: it stated that things moved not because they were pulled or pushed but because they followed the natural curve of space (they describe geodesics, *i.e.*, move in the line of least distance). Space is not a plain surface, smooth and uniform, but full of dimples and hollows, these occurring in the vicinity of masses of matter, the sun, for instance, (although one does not see how or why a mass of matter should roll down the inclined plane of a curved surface without some kind of push and pull—the problem is not solved but merely shifted and put off.) All this means to say that the pattern of the universe is absolutely geometrical and science in the end resolves itself into geo-

metry: the laws of Nature are nothing but theorems or corollaries deduced and deducible from a few initial postulates. Once again, on this line of enquiry also the universe is dissolved into abstract and psychological factors.

Apart from the standpoint of theoretical physics developed by Einstein, the more practical aspect as brought out in Wave Mechanics leads us into no less an abstract and theoretical domain. The Newtonian particle-picture, it is true, has been maintained in the first phase of modern physics which specialised in what is called Quantum Mechanics. But waves or particles—although the question as to their relative validity and verity still remains open—do not make much difference in the fundamental outlook. For in either view, the individual unit is beyond the ken of the scientist. A wave is not a wave but just the probability of a wave: it is not even a probable wave but a probability wave. Thus the pattern that Wave Mechanics weaves to show the texture of the ultimate reality is nothing more than a calculus of probabilities. By whichever way we proceed we seem to arrive always at the same inevitable conclusion.

So it is frankly admitted that what Science gives is not a faithful description of actuality, not a representation of material existence, but certain conventions or convenient signs to put together, to make a mental picture of our sensations and experiences. That does not give any clue to what the objective reality may or may not be like. Scientific laws are mental rules imposed upon Nature. It may

be asked why does Nature yield to such imposition? There must be then some sort of parallelism or commensurability between Nature and the observing Mind, between the pattern of Nature and the Mind's scheme or replica of it. If we successfully read into Nature things of the Mind, that means that there must be something very common between the two. Mind's readings are not mere figments, hanging in the air; for they are justified by their applicability, by their factual translation. This is arguing in a circle, a thorough-going mentalist like Eddington would say. What are facts? What is life? Anything more than what the senses and the mind have built up for us?

Jeans himself is on the horns of a dilemma.<sup>1</sup> Being a scientist, and not primarily a mathematician like Eddington, he cannot very well acquiesce in the liquidation of the material world; nor can he refute successfully the facts and arguments that Science itself has brought forward in favour of mentalism. He wishes to keep the question open for further light and surer grounds. In the meanwhile, however, he is reconciled to a modified form of mentalism. The laws of Nature, he says, are surely subjective in the sense that astronomical or geographical concepts, for example, such as the system of latitudes, longitudes, equator and axis, ellipse and quadrant and sextant, are subjective. These lines and figures are not drawn physically upon the earth or in space: they are mental constructs. "they are pointers or notations, but they note and point

<sup>1</sup> *Physics and Philosophy* by Sir James Jeans.



to the existence and the manner of existence of real objects in a real world. \*

In other words, one tries to come back more or less to the common sense view of things. One does not argue about what is naturally given as objective reality; whatever the mental gloss over it, it is there all the same. One accepts it, takes it on trust, if you like—one can admit even that it is an act of faith, as Russell and the Neo-Realists would maintain.

But Jeans' position is remarkable and very significant in one respect. When cornered in the process of argument, feeling that the world is inexorably dematerialised and mentalised, he suggests an issue which is natural to a philosopher, a mystic philosopher alone. Well, let him state his position in his own words the passage, I repeat, is so remarkable and significant;

"When we view ourselves in space and time, our consciousnesses are obviously the separate individuals of a particle-picture, but when we pass beyond space and time, they may perhaps form ingredients of a single continuous stream of life. As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life; the phenomena may be individuals carrying on separate existence in space and time, while in the deeper reality beyond space and time we may all be members of one body. In brief, modern physics is not altogether antagonistic to an objective idealism like that of Hegel." (p. 204)

*A la bonne heure!* That runs close to Upanishadic knowledge. It means that the world is objective—it is not the figment of an individual observer; but it is not material

either, it is consciousness in vibration. (Note the word "consciousness" is Jeans' own, not mine).

Jeans is not alone to have such a revolutionary and unorthodox view. He seems to take courage from Dirac also. Dirac too cannot admit an annihilation of the material world. His proposal to save and salvage it follows a parallel line. He says that the world presented or pictured by physical science may not be and is not the actual world, but it posits a substratum of reality to which it conforms: the pattern presented by subjective laws is so composed because of a pressure, an impact from an analogous substratum. There is no chain of causal relation in the pattern itself, the relation of causality is between the substratum reality and the pattern that it bodies forth. Here again we find ourselves at the end of physical inquiry driving straight into the tenuous spaces of spiritual metaphysics. We have one more example of how a modern physicist is metamorphosed into a mystic. What Dirac says is tantamount to the very well-known spiritual experience that the world as it appears to us is a vesture or symbol of an inner order of reality out of which it has been broadcast—*sah paryagāt*—and the true causes of things are not on the surface, the so-called antecedents, but behind in the subtler world called therefore the causal world, *kāraṇa jagat*.

Even Eddington is not so absurd or impossible as it may seem to some. He says, as we have seen, that all so-called laws of Nature can be discovered from within the mind itself, can be deduced logically from psycholo-

gically given premises: no empirical observation or objective experimentation is necessary to arrive at them: they are found *a priori* in the subject. Now, mystic experience always lays stress on extra-sensory knowledge: it declares that such a knowledge is not only possible, but that this alone is the right and correct knowledge. All things—matter and mind and life and all—being but vibrations of consciousness, even as the colours of a spectrum are vibrations, electro-magnetic waves of different frequency, mystic discipline enables one to enter into that condition in which one's consciousness mingles with all consciousness or with another particular consciousness (Patanjali's term is *samyama*), and one can have all knowledge that one wishes to have by this inner contact or concentration or identification, one discovers the knowledge within oneself, no external means of sense observation and experimental testing, no empirical inductive process is needed. We do not say that Eddington had in view anything of this kind, but that his attitude points in this direction.

That seems to be the burden, the underlying pre-occupation of modern physical science: it has been forced to grope towards some kind of mystic perception; at least, it has been put into a frame of mind, due to the crumbling of the very fundamentals of the past structure, which is less obstructive to other sources and spheres and ways of knowledge. Certainly, we must admit that we have moved very far from Laplace when we hear today a hard-boiled rationalist like De Broglie declare:

"The idealisations more or less schematic that our mind builds up are capable of representing certain facets of things, but they have inherent limitations and cannot contain within their frames all the richness of the reality."<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty that modern Science encounters is not, however, at all a difficulty: it may be so to the philosopher, but not to the mystic, the difficulty, that is to say, of positing a real objective world when all that we know or seize of it seems to be our own mental constructions that we impose upon it. Science has come to such a pass that it can do no more than take an objective world on trust.

Things need not, however, be so dismal looking. The difficulty arises because of a fundamental attitude—the attitude of a purely reasoning being. But Reason or Mind is only one layer or vein of the reality, and to see and understand and explain that reality through one single track of approach will naturally bias the view, it will present only what is real or immediate to it, and all the rest will appear as secondary or a formation of it. That is, of course, a truth that has been clearly brought out by the anti-intellectualist. But the vitalist's view is also likewise vitiated by a similar bias, as he contacts reality only through this prism of vital force. It is the old story of the Upanishad in which the seeker takes

<sup>1</sup> *La Physique Nouvelle et les Quanta* by Louis de Broglie, p. 12.

the Body, the Life and the Mind one after another and declares each in its turn to be the only and ultimate reality (Brahman).

The truth of the matter is that the integral reality is to be seized by an integral organon. To an integralised consciousness the integral reality is directly and immediately presented, each aspect is apprehended in and through its own truth and substance. The synthesis or integration is reached by a consciousness which is the basis and continent of all, collectively and severally, and of which all are various formations and expressions on various levels and degrees. This is the knowledge and experience given by the supreme spiritual consciousness.

### III

## THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSERVED

SCIENCE means objectivity, that is to say, elimination of the personal element—truth as pure fact without being distorted or coloured by the feelings and impressions and notions of the observer. It is the very opposite of the philosopher's standpoint who says that a thing exists because (and so long as) it is perceived. The scientist swears that a thing exists whether you perceive it or not, perception is possible because it exists, not the other way. And yet Descartes is considered not only as the father of modern philosophy, but also as the founder of modern mathematical science. But more of that anon. The scientific observer observes as a witness impartial and aloof: he is nothing more than a recording machine, a sort of passive mirror reflecting accurately and faithfully what is presented to it. This is indeed the great revolution brought about by Science in the world of human inquiry and in human consciousness, viz. the isolation of the observer from the observed.

In the old world, before Science was born, sufficient distinction or discrimination was not made between the observer and the observed. The observer mixed himself up or identified himself with what he observed and the result was not a scientific statement but a poetic description. Personal feelings, ideas, judgments entered



into the presentation of facts and the whole mass passed as truth, the process often being given the high-sounding name of Intuition, Vision or Revelation but whose real name is fancy. And if there happened to be truth of fact somewhere, it was almost by chance. Once we thought of the eclipse being due to the greed of a demon, and pestilence due to the evil eye of a wicked goddess. The universe was born out of an egg, the cosmos consisted of concentric circles of worlds that were meant to reward the virtuous and punish the sinner in graded degrees. These are some of the very well-known instances of pathetic fallacy, that is to say, introducing the element of personal sentiment in our appreciation of events and objects. Even today Nazi race history and Soviet Genetics carry that unscientific prescientific tradition.

Science was born the day when the observer cut himself aloof from the observed. Not only so, not only he is to stand aside, outside the field of observation and be a bare recorder, but that he must let the observed record itself, that is, be its own observer. Modern Science means not so much the observer narrating the story of the observed but the observed telling its own story. The first step is well exemplified in the story of Galileo. When hot discussion was going on and people insisted on saying—as Aristotle decided and common sense declared—that heavier bodies most naturally fall quicker from a height, it was this prince of experimenters who straightaway took two different weights, went up the tower of Pisa and let them drop and astounded the people by showing that

both travel with equal speed and fall to the ground at the same time.

Science also declared that it is not the observation of one person, however qualified, that determines the truth or otherwise of a fact, but the observation of many persons and the possibility of observations of all persons converging, coinciding, corroborating. It is only when observation has thus been tested and checked that one can be sure that the personal element has been eliminated. Indeed the ideal condition would be if the observer, the scientist himself, could act as part of the machine for observation: at the most he should be a mere assembler of the parts of the machine that would record itself, impersonally, automatically. The rocket instruments that are sent high up in the sky to record the temperature, pressure or other weather condition in the stratosphere or the deep sea recording machines are ingenious inventions in that line. The wizard Jagadish Chandra Bose showed his genius precisely in the way he made the plant itself declare its life-story: it is not what the scientist thinks or feels about the plant, but what the plant has to say of its own accord, as it were—its own tale of growth and decay, of suffering, spasm, swoon, suffocation or death under given conditions. This is the second step that Science took in the direction of impersonal and objective inquiry.

It was thought for long a very easy matter—at least not extraordinarily difficult—to eliminate the observer and keep only to the observed. It was always known how the view of the observer, that is to say, his observation changed

in respect of the observed fact with his change of position. The sun rises and sets to the observer on earth: to an observer on Mars, for example, the sun would rise and set, no doubt, but earth too along with, in the same way as Mars and sun appear to us now, while to an observer on the sun, the sun would seem fixed while the planets would be seen moving round. Again, we all know the observer in a moving train sees things outside the train moving past and himself at stand-still; the same observer would see another train moving alongside in the same direction and with the same speed as stuck to it and at stand-still, but as moving with double the speed if going in a contrary direction: and so on.

The method proposed for eliminating the observer was observation, more and more observation, and experiment, testing the observation under given conditions. I observe and record a series of facts and when I have found a sufficient number of them I see I am able to put them all together under a general title, a law of the occurrence or pattern of the objects observed. Further it is not I alone who can do it in any peculiar way personal to me, but that everybody else can do the same thing and arrive at the same series of facts leading to the same conclusion. I note, for example, the sun's path from day to day in the sky; soon we find that the curves described by the sun are shifted along the curve of an ellipse (that is to say, their locus is an ellipse). The ecliptic is thus found to be an ellipse which means that the earth moves round the sun in an ellipse.

But in the end a difficulty arose in the operation of observation. It proved to be not a simple process. The scientific observer requires for his observation the yardstick and the time-piece. Now, we have been pushed to admit a queer phenomenon (partly by observation and partly by a compelling deduction) that that these two measuring units are not constant; they change with the change of system, that is to say, according to the velocity of the system. In other words, each observer has his own unit of space and time measure. So the elimination of the personal element of the observer has become a complicated mathematical problem, even if one is sure of it finally.

There is still something more. The matter of calculating and measuring objectively was comparatively easy when the object in view was of medium size, neither too big nor too small. But in the field of the infinite and the infinitesimal, when from the domain of mechanical forces we enter into the region of electric and radiant energy, we find our normal measuring apparatus almost breaks down. Here accurate observation cannot be made because of the very presence of the observer, because of the very fact of observation. The ultimates that are observed are trails of light particles: now when the observer directs his eye (or the beam of light replacing the eye) upon the light particle, its direction and velocity are interfered with; the photon is such a tiny infinitesimal that a ray from the observer's eye is sufficient to deflect and modify its movement. And there is no way of determining or eliminating this element of deflection or interference. The

old Science knew certainly that a thermometer dipped in the water whose temperature it is to measure itself changes the initial temperature. But that was something calculable and objective. Here the position of the observer is something like a "possession", imbedded, ingrained, involved in the observed itself.

The crux of the difficulty is this. We say the observing eye or whatever mechanism is made to function for it, disturbs the process of observation. Now to calculate that degree or measure of disturbance one has to fall back upon another observing eye, and this again has to depend upon yet another behind. Thus there is an infinite regress and no final solution. So, it has been declared, in the ultimate analysis, scientific calculation gives us only the average result, and it is only average calculations that are possible.

Now we come to the sanctum, the Shekinah, of the problem. For there is a still deeper mystery. And preeminently it is an Einsteinian discovery. It is not merely the measuring ray of light, not merely the beam in the eye of the observer that is the cause of interference: the very mind behind the eye is involved in a strange manner. The mind is not a *tabula rasa*, it comes into the field with certain presuppositions—axioms and postulates, as it calls them—due to its angle of vision and perhaps to the influence upon it of immediate sense perception. It takes for granted, for example that light travels in a straight line, that parallels do not meet, indeed all the theorems and deductions of Euclidean geometry.

There is a strong inclination in the mind to view things as arranged according to that pattern. Einstein has suggested that the spherical scheme can serve as well or even better our observations. Riemann's non-Euclidean geometry has assumed momentous importance in contemporary scientific enquiry. It is through that scheme that Einstein proposes to find the equation that will subsume the largest number of actual and possible or potential facts and bring about the reconciliation of such irreconcilables as wave and particle, gravitation and electricity.

In any case, at the end of all our peregrinations we seem to circle back to our original Cartesian-cum-Barkeleyan position; we discover that it is not easy to extricate the observed from the observer: the observer is so deep set in the observed, part and parcel of it that there are scientists who consider their whole scientific scheme of the world as only a mental set-up, we may replace it very soon by another scheme equally cogent, subjective all the same. The subject has entered into all objects and any definition of the object must necessarily depend upon the particular poise of the subject. That is the cosmic immanence of the Purusha spoken of in the Upanishads—the one Purusha become many and installed in the heart of each and every object. There is indeed a status of the Subject in which the subject and the object are gathered into or form one reality. The observer and the observed are the two ends, the polarisation of a single entity; and all are reals at that level.



But the scientific observer is only the mental purusha and in his observation the absolute objectivisation is not possible. The Einsteinian equations that purport to rule out all local view-points can hardly be said to have transcended the coordinates of the subject. That is possible only to the consciousness of the cosmic Purusha.

(2)

Is it then to say that science is no longer science, it has now been converted into philosophy, even into idealistic philosophy?

In spite of Russell and Eddington who may be considered in this respect as counsellors of despair, the objective reality of the scientific field stands, it is asserted, although somewhat changed.

Now, there are four positions possible with regard to the world and reality, depending on the relation between the observer and the observed, the subject and the object. They are: (1) subjective, (2) objective, (3) subjective objective and (4) objective subjective. The first two are extreme positions, one holding the subject as the sole or absolute reality, the object being a pure fabrication of its will and idea, an illusion, and the other considering the object as the true reality, the subject being an outcome, an epiphenomenon of the object itself, an illusion after all. The first leads to radical or as it is called monistic spirituality the type of which is

Mayavada: the second is the highway of materialism, the various avatars of which are Marxism, Pragmatism, Behaviourism etc. In between lie the other two intermediate positions according to the stress or value given to either of the two extremes. The first of the intermediates is the position held generally by the idealists, by many schools of spirituality: it is a major Vedantic position. It says that the outside world, the object, is not an illusion, a mere fabrication of the mind or consciousness of the subject, but that it exists and is as real as the subject: it is dovetailed into the subject which is a kind of linchpin, holding together and even energising the object. The object can further be considered as an expression or embodiment of the subject. Both the subject and the object are made of the same stuff of consciousness—the ultimate reality being consciousness. The subject is the consciousness turned on itself and the object is consciousness turned outside or going abroad. This is preeminently the Upanishadic position. In Europe Kant holds a key position in this line: and on the whole, idealists from Plato to Bradley and Bosanquet can be said more or less to belong to the category. The second intermediate position views the subject as imbedded into the object, not the object into the subject as in the first one: the subject itself is part of the object something like its self-regarding or self-recording function. In Europe apart possibly from some of the early Greek thinkers (Anaxagoras or Democritus, for example), coming to more recent times, we can say that line runs

fairly well-represented from Leibnitz to Bergson. In India the Sankhyas and the Vaisheshikas move towards and approach the position; the Tantriks make a still more near approach.

Once again, to repeat in other terms the distinction which may sometimes appear to carry no difference. First the subjective objective in which the subject assumes the preponderant position, not denying or minimising the reality of the object. The external world, in this view, is a movement in and of the consciousness of a universal subject. It is subjective in the sense that it is essentially a function of the subject and does not exist apart from it or outside it; it is objective in the sense that it exists really and is not a figment or imaginative construction of any individual consciousness, although it exists in and through the individual consciousness in so far as that consciousness is universalised, is one with the universal consciousness (or the transcendental, the two can be taken together in the present connection). Instead of the Kantian transcendental idealism we can name it transcendental realism.

In the other case the world exists here below in its own reality, outside all apprehending subject; even the universal subject is in a sense part of it, immanent in it—it embraces the subject in its comprehending consciousness and composites it as part of itself or a function of its apprehension. The many Purushas (conscious beings or subjects) are embedded in the universal Nature, say the Sankhyas. Kali, Divine Nature, is the manifest omnipresent, omni-

scient, omnipotent reality holding within her the transcendent divine Purusha who supports, sanctions and inspires secretly, yet is dependent on the Mahashakti and without her is nothing, *śūnyam*. That is how the Tantriks put it. We may mention here, among European philosophers, the rather interesting conclusion of Leibnitz (to which Russell draws our attention): space is subjective to the view of each monad (subject unit) separately, it is objective when it consists of the assemblage of the viewpoints of all the monads.

The scientific outlook was a protest against the extreme subjective view: it started with the extreme objective standpoint and that remained the fundamental note till the other day, till the fissure of the nucleus opened new horizons to our somewhat bewildered mentality. We seem to have entered into a region where we still hold to the objective, no doubt, but not absolutely free from an insistent presence of the subjective. It is the second of the intermediate positions we have tried to describe. Science has yet to decide the implications of that position; whether it will try to entrench itself as much as possible on this side of the subjective or whether it can yield further and go over to or link itself with the deeper subjective position.

The distinction between the two may after all be found to be a matter of stress only, involving no fundamental difference, especially as there are sure to be gradations from the one to the other. The most important landmark, however, the most revolutionary step in modern science

would be the discovery of the eternal observer or some sign or image of his seated within the observed phenomena of moving things—*puruṣaḥ prakṛitistho hi*, as the Gita says.

## *Section Three*

NOTES AND COMMENTS



## AN AGE OF REVOLUTION

THERE has been a revolutionary change in the scientific outlook in recent times. A very fundamental principle—the very postulate on which the whole edifice of physical Science has been built up—is now being called in question. We thought that the unity and uniformity of Nature is a cardinal fact and nothing can shake it. Well, it appears that solid basis too has proved to be no more than an eidolon.

The search for a universal principle of Nature is a metaphysical as well as a scientific preoccupation. In ancient days, for example, we had the Water of Thales or the Fire of Heraclitus as the one original unifying principle of this kind. With the coming of the Renaissance and the New Illumination we laughed them out and installed instead the mysterious Ether. For a long time this universal reigned supreme and now that too has gone the way of its predecessors. We thought for a time that we had found in Electric Energy the one sovereign principle in Nature. At a time when we had a few elements—discrete, different, fundamental units—that in their varying combinations built up the composite structure of Nature, apart from the fact that they reposed finally on the ultimate unifying principle of Ether, it was found also that they

all behaved in an uniform and identical and therefore predictable manner. The time and the place (and the mass) being given, every thing went according to a pattern and a formula, definite, fixed, mathematically rigid. Even the discovery of one element after another till the number reached the famous figure 92 (itself following a line of mathematically precise and inevitable development) did not materially alter the situation and caused no tribulation. For on further scrutiny a closer unity revealed itself: the supposed disparity in the substance of the various elements was found to be an illusion, for they all appeared now as different organisations or dispositions of the same electric energy (although the identity of electric energy with radiant energy was not always very clear). Thus we could conclude that as the substance was the same, its mode of working also would be uniform and patterned. In other words, the mechanistic conception still ruled our view of Nature. That means, the ultimate units, the particles (of energy) that compose Nature are like sea-sands or water-drops, each one is fundamentally similar to any other and all behave similarly, reacting uniformly to the same forces that act upon them.

Well, it is now found that they do not do so. However same or similar constitutionally, each unit is *sui generis* and its movement cannot be predicted. That movement does not depend upon its mass or store of energy or its position in a pattern, as a wholly mechanistic conception would demand: it is something incalculable, one should say even, erratic. In a radioactive substance, the particle

that is shot out, becomes active, cannot be predetermined by any calculation, even if that is due to a definitely and precisely arranged bombardment. So we have come to posit a principle of uncertainty, as a very fundamental law of Nature. It practically declares that the ultimate particle is an autonomous unit, it is an individual, almost a personality, and seems to have a will of its own. A material unit acts very much like a biological unit: it does not obey mechanically, answer mechanically as an automaton, but seems to possess a capacity for choice, for assent or refusal, for a free determination. The mechanistic view presented is due to an average functioning. The phenomenon has been explained by a very apt image. It is like an army. A group of soldiers, when they are on parade, look all similar and geometrically patterned: each is just like another and all move and march in the same identical manner. But that is when you look at the whole, the collectivity, but looked individually, each one regains his separate distinct personality, each having his own nature and character, his own unique history: there no two are alike, each is *non pareil* and behaves differently, incalculably.

That is how we have been led almost to the threshold of a will, of a life principle, of a consciousness, however rudimentary, embedded in the heart of Matter. All the facts that are now cropping up, the new discoveries that are being made and which we have to take into cognisance lead inevitably towards such a conclusion. Without such a conclusion a rational co-ordination of all the data of

experience is hardly possible. A physical scientist may not feel justified to go beyond the purely physical data, but the implications of even such data, the demand for a fair hypothesis that can harmonise and synthesise them are compelling even a physicist to become a psychologist and a metaphysician.

Looked at from below with the eye of reason and sense observation straining at it, the thing that appears only as a possibility—at best, as a probability—is revealed to the eyes of vision surveying from above as a self-evident reality, a reality before which the apparent realities posited by sense and reason become subsidiary and auxiliary, far-off echoes. The facts of sense-perception are indeed the branches spread out below while the root of the tree lies above: in other words, the root-reality is consciousness and all that exist are vibrations of that consciousness extended and concretised. This is the truth which modern science, in its farthest advances, would like to admit but dare not.

## II

### THE CHANGED SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

THERE is, of course, more than one line of scientific outlook at the present day. It is well-known that continental scientists generally and Marxist scientists in particular belong to a different category from Jeans and Eddington. But the important point is this: a considerable body of scientists frankly hold the "idealist" view, and these come from the very front rank *qua* scientists. Discussion arises when it is seriously put forward that Eddington and Jeans are not authorities in science equaling any other great names; as if it is contended that because a scientist holds the idealist view, ergo, he is a pseudo-scientist, a third degree luminary, a back-bencher, a medievalist. The Marxists also declare, we may recall in this connection, that the bourgeois cannot be a true poet, in order to be a poet one must be a proletarian.

There is a scientific obscurantism, which is not less obscure because it is scientific, and one must guard against it with double care and watchfulness. It is the mentality of the no-changer whose motto seems to be: "Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même". Let me explain. The scientist who prefers still to be called a materialist must remember that the (material) ground under his feet has shifted considerably since the time he first propounded his materialistic position: he does not stand

in the same place (or plane?) as he did even twenty years ago. The change has been basic and fundamental—fundamental, because the very definitions and postulates with which we once started have been called in question, thrown over-board or into the melting pot.

Shall we elucidate a little? We were once upon a time materialists, that is to say, we had very definite and fixed notions about Matter: to Matter we gave certain invariable characteristics, inalienable properties. How many of them stand today unscathed on their legs? Take the very first, the crucial property ascribed to Matter: "Matter is that which has extension." Well, an electric charge, a unit energy of it, the ultimate constituent of Matter as discovered by Science today, can it be said to occupy space? In the early days of Science, one Boscovich advanced a theory according to which the ultimate material particle (a molecule, in his time) does not occupy space, it is a mere mathematical point toward or from which certain forces act. The theory, naturally, was laughed out of consideration; but today we have come perilously near it. Again, another postulate describing Matter's dharma was: "two material particles cannot occupy the same place at the same time". Now what do you say of the neutron and proton that coalesce and form the unit of a modern atomic nucleus? Once more, the notion of the indestructibility of matter has been considerably modified in view of the phenomenon of an electric particle (electron) being wholly transmuted ("dematerialised" as the scientists themselves say) into



a light particle (photon). Lastly, the idea of the constancy of *mass*—a bedrock of old-world physics—is considered today to be a superstition, an illusion. If after all these changes in the idea of Matter, a man still maintains that he is a materialist, as of old, well, I can only exclaim in the Shakespearean phrase: "Bottom, thou art translated"! What I want to say is that the changes that modern physics proposes to execute in its body are not mere amendments and emendations, but they mean a radical transfiguration, a subversion and a mutation. And more than the actual changes effected, the possibilities, the tendencies that have opened out, the lines along which further developments are proceeding do point not merely to a reformation, but a revolution.

Does this mean that Science after all is veering to the Idealist position? Because we have modified the meaning and connotation of Matter does it follow that we have perforce arrived at spirituality? Not quite so. As Jeans says, the correct scientific position would be to withhold one's judgment about the ultimate nature of matter, whether it is material or mental (spiritual, we would prefer to say): it is an attitude of *non possumus*. But such neutrality, is it truly possible and is it so very correct? We do see scientists lean on one side or the other, according to the vision or predisposition that one carries.

From our standpoint, as we view the modern scientific developments, what we see is not that Matter has been spiritualised, but that it has been considerably demate-

rialised, even immaterialised, that it is in the process of further dematerialisation or immaterialisation. That opens a long and large vista. We say Science by itself cannot arrive at the spiritual, for there is a frontier bar which has to be overleaped, negotiated by something like a somersault. For the scientific view is after all limited by one scope and range of the physical eye. Still, this eye has begun to see things and in a manner to which it was not normally accustomed; it has been trained and educated, made keen and supple so that it seems to be getting more and more attuned even to other vibrations of light beyond and outside the normal sevenfold spectrum.

Science has not spiritualised (or idealised or mentalised) the world; it has not spiritualised itself. Agreed. But what it has done is remarkable. First, with its new outlook it has cut away the ground from where it was wont to give battle to religion and spirituality, it has abjured its cast-iron strait-jacket mentality which considered that senses and syllogism encompass all knowledge and objects of knowledge. It has learnt humility and admits of the possibility of more things there being in heaven and earth which are not amenable to its fixed co-ordinates. Secondly, it has gone at times even beyond this attitude of benevolent neutrality. For certain of its conclusions, certain ways of formulation seem to echo other truths, other manners. That is to say, if Science by itself is unable to reach or envisage the spiritual outlook, yet the position it has reached, the vistas it envisages seem to be not perhaps exactly one with, but in line with what our vision

(of the scientific world) would be like if once we possess the spiritual eye. Matter, Science says today, is energy and forms of matter, objects, are various vibrations of this one energy. What is this energy? According to science, it is electrical, radiant, etherial (Einstein replaces "ether" by "field")—biological science would venture to call it life energy. You have only to move one step farther and arrive at the greater and deeper generalisation—Matter is a mode of the energy of consciousness, all forms of Matter are vibrations of consciousness.

### III

#### KNOWLEDGE BY IDENTITY

SRI AUROBINDO says, knowledge—true knowledge—comes always by identity, i.e., when you are identified with the object, when the knower and the known are one. He further adds that even ordinary knowledge, sense-perception, comes in fact by that way, although it may look otherwise, viz., as a process of logical induction or deduction or both. When I am angry, he illustrates, I know I am angry because I become anger or when I know I am existent, it is because I am one with my existence.

Prof. Das<sup>1</sup> seeks to controvert the position. He says, when there is complete identity there is no knowledge. If I am wholly one with the object, I get merged and lost in it. When I become a thing, I no longer know the thing. If I know a thing, it means the thing is separate from me, in front of me; the relation of subject-object is the very essence, the *sine qua non* of all knowledge. Taking up the illustration, Prof. Das says: if I know I am angry, it clearly shows that I and my anger are separate entities; similarly, I know I exist, it too shows that I am separate, partially at least, from my existence, that is to say, as knower transcendent to the object known. In knowing there cannot thus be complete identity.

Prof. Das evidently holds the orthodox, rather rigid,

<sup>1</sup> *Calcutta Review*, 1948 August-September

Sankhya position, viz., the Purusha or witness is always separate from Prakriti, its object. But after all this is only a standpoint, there are other standpoints equally valid and more comprehensive. Sri Aurobindo holds in this respect what may be generically called the Vedantic position where the basic epistemological principle is that the knower and the known (*jnāta* and *jneya*) are fused together in knowledge (*jnāna*). One Vedantic line, it is true however, seems to arrive at a different conclusion, for thus it is asserted, where there is absolute identity, who is it that sees or knows or what is it that is seen or known! But this is only one aspect of the phenomenon.

When the Upanishad says, one who knows Brahman becomes Brahman, does it not mean that the very condition of knowing Brahman is to become it? Indeed, there is no contradiction or incommensurability between knowing and becoming, between (what is termed by the mystic as) *Knowledge* and *Realisation*. Consciousness has a twofold power, Sri Aurobindo says: the power of apprehension and the power of comprehension—*prajnāna* and *vijnāna*. *Prajnana*, the apprehending consciousness, sets the object in front, away and separate from itself and contemplates it: *Vijnana*, the comprehending consciousness, on the other hand, comprehends, embraces the object within itself, as part of its own being. The two are not distinct or incompatible movements, they go together and form one single movement of consciousness. It is the mind, the reason that makes the separation;

it is not possible for the mind to view two things simultaneously. It is because of this incapacity of the mind, married to its logic of the finite, that Sri Aurobindo points out the way of correcting it by a higher supramental power which operates in a global way.

Let us go back to our illustration. I am angry means both I am anger and I know I have anger. It is true in fact and experience. Similarly I am (existent) means both I am existence and I know I am existent. The transcendence of the subject (of which Prof. Das speaks) is nothing but the poise of the consciousness as the apprehending Purusha: it does not negate or exclude identification, which is another arm of a biune process. The two are complementary to each other. Also Purusha and Prakriti are not contradictories, not mutually exclusive; they are dual aspects or dispositions of the same consciousness or self-conscious reality. Consciousness involved and lost to itself and in itself is Prakriti, consciousness evolved and looking out at itself is Purusha. I am aware of myself and I am myself are two ways of saying the same thing. We imagine Shakespeare expressed the experience graphically and poetically when he made his character say:

"Richard loves Richard, that is I am I".

In seeking to disvalue the principle of identity as a fundamental element in knowing, Prof. Das brings in to witness on his side the logical copula. Some logicians, of course, assert a parallelism if not identity between the



laws of thought and the laws of language, language being conceived as the very image—a photograph—of thought. but the truth of the matter is that it is and it is not so, as in many other things. However, here when it is stated that the copula disjoining the subject and the predicate is the very pattern of all process of knowledge, one mistakes, we are afraid, a scheme or a formula, for the thing itself, a way of understanding a fact for the fact itself. Such a formula for understanding, however it may be valid for more or less analytical languages, those of later growth, need not and did not have the same propriety in respect of other older languages. We know the evolution of language has been in the direction of more and more disjunction of its component limbs even like the progression of the human mind and intellect. The modern analytical languages with their army of independent prepositions have taken the place of the classical languages which were predominantly inflexional. The Greek and Latin started the independent prepositional forms in the form of a fundamentally inflexional structure. Still further back, in Sanskrit for example, the inflexional form reigns supreme. Prefixes and affixes served the role of prepositions. And if we move further backward, the synthetic movement is so complete that the logical components (the subject, the copula, the predicate) are fused together into one symbol (the chinese ideogram). We are here nearer to the original nature and pattern of knowledge—a single homogeneous movement of apprehension. There is no sanctity or absoluteness in

the logical disposition of thought structure; the Aristotelian makes it a triplicity, the Indian Nyaya would extend the dissection to five or seven limbs. But whatever the logical presentation, the original psychological movement is a single indivisible élan—and the Vedantic fusion of the knower, the knowledge and the known in identity remains the fundamental fact.

#### IV

### THE PLACE OF REASON

ANOTHER point in Sri Aurobindo's view of consciousness which troubles Prof. Das is about the exact nature and function of Reason. For while on one side Sri Aurobindo never seems to be tired of pointing out the inherent incapacity of Reason—in the good company of the ancient Rishis—as an instrument for the discovery or realisation of the Absolute or the integral Reality, he asserts, on the other hand, almost in the same breath as it were, that mind can have some idea or conception of what is beyond it, which it so often vainly strives to seize or represent. Evidently, the rationalist logic fails to hold together the two ends, as it is further seen in Prof. Das's failure to perceive any distinction between types or gradations of "thinking".<sup>1</sup> He thinks that just as a philosopher thinks, or a cabman thinks or an animal thinks, all must think in the same way and through the same function of the same organ: either there is thinking (thinking proper, of one particular kind) or there is no thinking. That Nature consists of a graduated scale in every line of its movements, and that the gradations shade off into each other—not only so but that each scale

<sup>1</sup> *Calcutta Review*, January 1949

or principle may contain within itself all the others<sup>1</sup>—is a phenomenon which runs contrary to the “either this or that” or “no-overlapping” principle, like the colour blind for whom things are either black or white. In the global outlook, however, we do not stand in the relation of division, separation, mutual exclusiveness. There is a consciousness in which all contraries find a harmonising truth and rhythm.

In Sri Aurobindo Reason and Intuition possess a dual relation of mutual negation and mutual affirmation, of exclusiveness and inclusiveness, as indeed is the relation of Brahman and the World. One negates the other in the sphere of ignorance but in knowledge one affirms the other. That is to say, Reason or mental logic, so long as it is dominated by the senses, by the external impressions from things and by its analytic or exclusively separative method of procedure, is a denial of Intuition and a bar to spiritual experience. But Reason can be purified, relieved of its dross, illumined (*sambuddha*)

<sup>1</sup> Thus, take the principles of matter, life and mind. They are separate and distinct from one point of view—the logical and practical. But life came out of matter, and then mind out of life—that is the evolutionary conception. In other words, matter shades off into life, there is a point where it is difficult to say whether it is matter or life; similarly there is a point where life shades off into mind, where mind and life are fused together. We can further say that in matter there is a life and there is a mind, and in life there is a matter and a mind and in mind too there is a matter and a life. But these facts of Nature are disconcerting to the one-track of the logical philosopher and make the confusion worse confounded for him.

—sublimated and uplifted—then it comes to its own, becomes what it really is and should be—a frame to give body to what is beyond and unembodied, a mirror in conceptual terms to what is supra-conceptual. It loses its hard rigidity and becomes supple, loses its obscurity, density and becomes transparent: it attains a new rhythm and gait and capacity. Many of the Upanishadic mantras, a good part of the Gita, do that. And Sri Aurobindo's own exposition is a miracle in that style. "Reason was a helper, Reason is the bar"—and, we can add, Reason will again be an aid. The world, as it is, is anything but Divine; and yet it is nothing but the Divine essentially and fundamentally; it can and will attain the divine figure apparently and externally too. Even so with regard to man's mind and reason and all his other limbs.

## V

### THE REVEALER AND THE REVELATION

How the horizontal view limits and maims one's spiritual perception is further illustrated in the case of the famous Gloomy Dean. Dean Inge is a divine and as spiritual a person as one can hope to be in the modern world. He has however voluntarily clipped his wings and in the name of a surer rational knowledge and saner spirituality prefers a lower flight among known, familiar and nameable ranges to a transcendent soaring in mystic regions beyond. He has made a somewhat trenchant distinction between the Revelation and the Revealer. He says we can know God only by his qualities: what he is, if anything, beside his qualities none can define. In the words of the poet,

These are His works and His veils and His shadows;  
But where is He then? by what name is He known?

According to the Dean the qualities themselves are God, the living God whom one can worship. The True, the Good and the Beautiful—the Hellenic trinity he adores more than the Holy Trinity. "The God of religion is rather the revelation than the revealer. The source of revelation cannot be revealed: the ground of knowledge cannot be known" (*Mysticism in Religion* by Dean Inge,



p. 155). This, one might say, almost echoes the Upanishadic mantra, "How can one know the knower?" (*Vijñā-tāram are kena vijānīyāt*). The Upanishad says indeed that he who thinks he knows does not certainly know, but he who says he knows not is the one who knows; he knows who knows not, he knows not who knows. This simply means that God, the supreme Reality, is apprehended in and through other channels than mind and reason. It is a commonplace of spiritual experience that the Spirit is directly, immediately realisable, although its indirect approaches are walled in by a thousand appearances. A direct non-rational experience is not however something vague, nebulous, inarticulate; it is even more concrete, precise and tangible than a sense experience or a rational idea. Not only so, a suprarational knowledge can be grasped and presented by the intellect if it is purified and illumined. A brain mind under the sway of the senses and the outgoing impulse is an obstacle: it disturbs and prevents the higher Light. But passive and transparent it can be a faithful mirror, a docile instrument and channel. That is why the Upanishad says in the first instance that the supreme Reality cannot be seized by the reason, but in another context, it declares that the mind, the intelligence too has to hold and realise the same. Normally intellect acts as a lid, but it can also be a reflector or projector.

One knows the Revealer for one becomes it. Knowledge by identity is the characteristic of spiritual knowledge. If one keeps oneself separate and seeks to apprehend the

Divine as an object outside, the Divine escapes or is caught only by the trail it leaves, its echoes and shadows, its apparent qualities and attributes. But one with the Divine, the being realises and possesses it in full consciousness, the Revealer reveals himself as such (*vr̥ṇute tanum swām*) and not merely in or as his phenomenal formulations.

## VI

### DARSHANA AND PHILOSOPHY

THERE is a mental approach to spiritual truths and there is a direct and immediate approach or rather contact. The mind sees as though through a mist, a darkling glass, a more or less opaque veil, and the thing envisaged presents a blurred and not unoften a deformed appearance. The mind has its own predispositions—its own categories and terms, its own forms and figures—which it has to use when it seeks to express that which is beyond it. Naturally the object, the truth as it is, it cannot apprehend or represent; it gives as it were the reverse side of an embroidery work. It goes round about the thing, has to take recourse to all kinds of contortions and gymnastics and grimaces to ape the natural gesture of the truth. But mind acts in this way, as a veil rather than a medium, when one is stationed in it or below it and strains to look at what is above and beyond. On the other hand, if the consciousness is stationed above the mind, that is to say, if it has direct access or contact with the truth, the spiritual reality, in that case, mind need not act as a veil, it too can be made transparent, and suffused with the higher light, it too can translate faithfully, present and embody the reality beyond somewhat as it acutally is, in its native rhythm and figure and not diffracted and diffused through a hazy atmosphere.

European thought, European philosophy particularly, moves under the aegis of the Mind. It takes its stand within

the Mind and from there tries to reach out to truths and realities; and therefore, however far it goes, its highest flights of perception, its most intimate contacts with spirit-truths are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. The Indian standpoint, on the contrary, is first to contact the truth by a direct realisation—through meditation, concentration, an uplifting and a deepening of the consciousness, through Yoga, spiritual discipline, and then endeavour to express the truth thus realised, directly intuited or revealed, through mental terms, to make it familiar and communicable to the normal intelligence. Mind, so subordinated and keyed to a new rhythm, becomes, as far as it is possible for it, a channel, a vehicle and not a veil. All the main systems of Indian philosophy have this characteristic as their background. Each stands on a definite experience, a spiritual realisation, a direct contact with an aspect of truth and in and through that seeks to give a world-view, building up an intellectual system, marshalling rational conclusions that are natural to it or derive inevitably from it. In the Upanishads, which preceded the Darshanās, the spiritual realisations were not yet mentally systematised or logically buttressed: truths were delivered there as self-evident statements, as certitudes luminous in their own authenticity. We accept them without question and take them into our consciousness as forming its fundamental norms, structuring its most intimate inscape. This is *darśana*, seeing, as philosophy is named in India. One sees the truth or reality and describes it as it is seen, its limbs and ges-

tures, its constituents and functions. Philosophy here is fundamentally a recording of one's vision and a translation or presentation of it in mental terms.

The procedure of European philosophy is different. There the reason or the mental light is the starting-point. That light is cast about: one collects facts, one observes things and happenings and then proceeds to find out a general truth—a law, a hypothesis—justified by such observations. But as a matter of fact this is the ostensible method: it is only a make-believe. For mind and reason are not normally so neutral and impersonal, a *tabula rasa*. The observer already comes into the field with a definite observational angle and a settled viewpoint. The precise sciences of today have almost foundered on this question of the observer entering inextricably into his observations and vitiating them. So in philosophy too as it is practised in Europe, on a closer observation, if the observer is carefully observed, one finds not unoften a core of suppositions, major premisses taken for granted hidden behind the logical apparatus. In other words, even a hardened philosopher cherishes at the back of his mind *à priori* judgments and his whole philosophy is only a rationalisation of an inner prejudgment, almost a window-dressing of a perception that came to him direct and in other secret ways. That was what Kant meant when he made the famous distinction between the Pure and the Practical Reason and their categories. Only the direct perceptions, the spiritual realisations are so much imbedded behind, covered so much with the mist of mind's struggle and ten-

sion and imaginative construction that it is not always easy to disengage the pure metal from the ore.

We shall take the case of one such philosopher and try to illustrate our point. We are thinking of Whitehead. The character of European philosophical mind is well exemplified in this remarkable modern philosopher. The anxiety to put the inferences into a strict logical frame makes a naturally abstruse and abstract procedure more abstruse and abstract. The effort to present supra-rational truths in terms of reason and syllogism clouds the issues more than it clarifies them. The fundamental perception, the living intuition that is behind his entire philosophy and world outlook is that of an Immanent God, a dynamic evolving Power working out the growth and redemption of mankind and the world (the apotheosis of the World, as he puts it). It is the theme which comes last in the development of his system, as the culminating conclusion of his philosophy, but it is the basic presupposition, the first principle that inspires his whole outlook, all the rest is woven and extended around this central nucleus. The other perception intimate to this basic original perception and inseparable from it is a synthetic view in which things that are usually supposed to be contraries find their harmony and union, viz., God and the World, Permanence and Flux, Unity and multiplicity, the Universal and the Individual. The equal reality of the two poles of an integral truth is characteristic of many of the modern philosophical systems. In this respect Whitehead echoes a fundamental conclusion of Sri Aurobindo.



There is another concept in Whitehead which seems to be moulded after a parallel concept in Sri Aurobindo: it is with regard to the working out of the process of creation, the mechanism of its dynamism. It is almost a glimpse into the occult functioning of the world forces. Whitehead speaks of two principles that guide the world process, first, the principle of limitation, and second, the principle of *ingress*. The first one Sri Aurobindo calls the principle of concentration (and of exclusive concentration) by which the infinite and the eternal limits himself, makes himself finite and temporal and infinitesimal, the universal transforms itself into the individual and the particular. The second is the principle of descent, which is almost the corner-stone in Sri Aurobindo's system. There are layers of reality: the higher forces and formulations enter into the lower, work upon it and bring about a change and transformation, purification and redemption. All progress and evolution is due to this influx of the higher, the deeper into the lower and superficial plane of existence.

There is one concept in Whitehead which seems rather strange to us; it is surely a product of the brain-mind. God, according to him, is not the creator: he is only the Redeemer, he is a shaper but not the source and origin of things. That is because he thinks that if God is made the creator of the world, he would be held responsible for the evil there. This difficulty comes when one thinks of God too much in the popular anthropomorphic way, like someone seated above the world and passing judgment upon a world which is not his doing. God is perhaps a

lover of the world, but not its Master—a certain Christian outlook says. According to Sri Aurobindo, God is a triple reality in his transcendental, cosmic and individual aspect. In creating the world, God creates, that is to say, manifests himself. And Evil is an evolute in the process of God's self-creation through self-limitation: it proceeds to self-annihilation and even self-transmutation in a farther process of God's self-unfoldment in world and Nature.

To return to our main theme, we should point out, however, that in Europe too at one time (during the whole Middle Age, the Age of Scholasticism) philosophy was considered only as a handmaid of Religion, it had to echo and amplify and reason out the dogmas (which were some times real spiritual experiences or revelations); but the New Illumination came and philosophy declared her autonomy, only that autonomy did not last long. For today in Europe Philosophy has become the handmaid of Science. It was natural, since Reason is not a self-sufficient faculty, it is mediatory and must be ancillary either to something above it or something below it—either to Revelation or to sense-perception.

## VII

### THE SANCTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

THE sanctity of the individual, the value of the human person is one of the cardinal articles of faith of the modern consciousness. Only it has very many avatars. One such has been the characteristic mark of the group of philosophers (and mystics) who are nowadays making a great noise under the name of Existentialists. The individual personality exists, they say, and its nature is freedom. In other words, it chooses, as it likes, its course of life, at every step, and creates its destiny. This freedom, however, may lead man and will inevitably lead him, according to one section of the group, to the perception and realisation of God, an infinite in which the individual finite lives and moves and has his being; according to others, the same may lead to a very different consummation, to Nothingness, the Great Void, Nihil. All existence is bounded by something unknown and intangible which differs according to your luck or taste,—one would almost say to your line of approach, put philosophically, according either to the positive pole or the negative, God or Non-existence. The second alternative seems to be an inevitable corollary of the particular conception of the individual that is entertained by some, viz., the individual existing only in relation to individuals. Indeed the leader of the French school, Jean-Paul Sartre—not a negligible playwright and novelist—seems to conceive the individual as nothing

more than the image formed in other individuals with whom he comes in contact. Existence literally means standing out or outside (ex+sistet), coming out of oneself and living in other's consciousness—as one sees one's exact image in another's eye. It is not however the old-world mystic experience of finding one's self in other selves. For here we have an exclusively level or horizontal view of the human personality. The personality is not seen in depth or height, but in line with the normal phenomenal formation. It looks as though, to save personality from the impersonal dissolution to which all monistic idealism leads, the present conception seeks to hinge all personalities upon each other so that they may stand by and confirm each other. But the actual result seems to have been not less calamitous. When we form and fashion each other, we are not building with anything more substantial than sand. Personalities are thus mere eddies in the swirl of cosmic life, they rise up and die down, separate and melt into each other and have no consistency and no reality in the end. The freedom too which is ascribed to such individuals, even when they feel it so, is only a sham and a make-believe. Within Nature nothing is free, all is mechanical law—Karma is supreme. The Sankhya posits indeed many Purushas, free, lodged in the midst of Prakriti, but there the Purusha is hardly an active agent, it is only an inactive, passive, almost impotent, witness. The Existentialist, on the contrary, seeks to make of the individual an active agent; he is not merely *being*, embedded or merged in

the original *Dasein*, mere existence, but *becoming*, the entity that has come out, stood out in its will and consciousness, articulated itself in name and form and act. But the person that stands out as part and parcel of Prakriti, the cosmic movement, is, as we have said, only an instrument, a mode of that universal Nature. The true person that informs that apparent formulation is something else.

To be a person, it is said, one must be apart from the crowd. A person is the "single one", one who has attained his singularity, his individual wholeness. And the life's work for each individual person is to make the crowd no longer a crowd, but an association of single ones. But how can this be done? It is not simply by separating oneself from the crowd, by dwelling upon oneself that one can develop into one's true person. The individuals, even when perfect single ones, do not exist by themselves or in and through one another. The mystic or spiritual perception posits the Spirit or God, the All-self as the background and substance of all the selves. Indeed, it is only when one finds and is identified with the Divine in oneself that one is in a position to attain one's true selfhood and find oneself in other selves. And the re-creation of a crowd into such divine individuals is a cosmic work in which the individual is at best a collaborator, not the master and dispenser. Anyway, one has to come out of the human relationship, rise above the give-and-take of human individuals—however completely individual each one may be—and

establish oneself in the Divine's consciousness which is the golden thread upon which is strung all the assembly of individuals. It is only in and through the Divine, the Spiritual Reality and Person, that one enters into true relation and dynamic harmony with others.

The truth of the personality is not to be found in its horizontal, but vertical dimension. The Existentialist speaks of the existence (standing out) of the human person as a transcendence. But real transcendence is not so much in coming out as in going up and beyond. To be outside oneself is not always to transcend oneself: to be above oneself is the real transcendence. Man is a true and free person only when he is lord of Prakriti, dominating and commanding Nature, when he is identified with Ishwara, the supreme Person, the Master, and becomes an incarnate will and consciousness of His. The soul in ignorance and in ignorant relation with others must rise and envisage its archetype in the Supreme Divine, as a free formulation of an Idea-Force of the Infinite.

If we do not keep in view this vertical transcendence and confuse it with immanence, we are likely to arrive at queer conclusions, as for example, one Existentialist says: polarity being an essential truth of the reality, the law of day and night is an eternal and immutable law and therefore, God cannot subsist as pure love; there must be also anger in him. In fact, God too is a becoming God as the human being. The limitation of such a view, characteristically Germanic and intellectual, is evident.



## VIII

### SARTRIAN FREEDOM

THE poise of the ego, the consciousness of the psycho-vital Purusha as envisaged and experienced by Sartre leads to many other not less catastrophic conclusions. Here is something more on Freedom which seems to be almost the corner-stone of his system:

"Freedom is not *a* being: it is *the* being of man, that is to say, his not-being". A very cryptic mantra. Let us try to unveil the Shekinah. "Being" means "be-ing" i.e. existing, something persisting, continuing in the same condition, something fixed, a status. Freedom is not a *thing* of that kind, it is movement: even so, it is not a continuous movement. According to Bergson, the true, the ultimate reality is a continuity of urge (*élan vital*); according to Sartre, however, in line with the trend of modern scientific knowledge, the reality is an assemblage of discrete units of energy, packets or quanta. So freedom is an urge, a spurt (*jaillissement*): it acts in a disconnected fashion and it is absolute and unconditional. It is veritably the wind that bloweth where it listeth. It has no purpose, no direction, no relation: for all those attributes or definitions would annul its absoluteness. It does not stop or halt or dwell upon, it bursts forth and passes. It does not exist, that is stay: therefore it is non-being. Man's

being then consists of a conglomeration (ensemble) of such freedoms. And that is the whole reality of man, his very essence. We have said that a heavy sense of responsibility hangs upon the free Purusha: but it appears the Sartrean Purusha is a divided personality. In spite of the sense of responsibility (or because of it?) he acts irresponsibly; for, acting otherwise would not be freedom. So then this essence, the self-consciousness, self-existence, presence in oneself is not a status, a fixed standing entity: it is not a point, even if geometrical; it is, Sartre describes, the jet from one point to another, for, real point there is none: so it is the emptiness behind all concrete realities that is the true reality, *asat brahman, śūnyam*—to Sartre that is freedom, freedom absolute and ultimate.

Practically this conception of freedom brings into high relief, makes almost all in all, only one aspect, one character or attribute of freedom: the abolition of all ties and obligations and relations beyond oneself involving a hollow self-sufficiency. Naturally such an outlook requires against it a complementary one, even if it is not to correct and complete, at least to support and implement it. Sartre too cannot ignore the fact that the free being is not an isolated phenomenon in the world; it exists along with and in the company of others of the same nature and quality. Indeed human society is that in essence, an *association of freedoms*, although these movements of freedom are camouflaged in appearance and are not recognised by the free persons themselves. The interaction between the free persons, the reflection of oneself in others and the

mutual dependence of egos is a constant theme in the novels and plays of Sartre.

Freedom cannot be real freedom unless it is license: yet *soci ty* means a curtailment or inhibition or modification of this absolute liberty. This conflict has never been resolved in Sartre and is fundamental to his ideology, the source of his tragic nihilism. That is because the consciousness here lives horizontally, level with the normal, what we described as psycho-vital consciousness. The way out lies in transcendence, in a vertical uplifting of the consciousness and the being.

## IX

### A MODERNIST MENTALITY

ANDRÉ Gide, a very well-known name in French letters for the last half a century, is quoted, very appreciatively, in the editorial of the *World Review* (July 1950), as saying:

"The world can only be saved, if it can be, by the rebels. Without them there would be an end to our civilisation, our culture, all that we love and that gave to our presence on earth a secret justification. They are, these rebels, the salt of the earth and the men sent from God. For I am convinced that God does not exist, and that we have to create him."

The truth expressed in these well-chiselled lines ("purple patches", I was going to say perhaps somewhat uncharitably) is, as always happens when we are for a rounded phrase and a neat thought, only half truth or even quarter truth. It all depends on the meaning we attach to the words, the shade trailing behind the thought. For, first of all, it is true, it is even a truism that the rebel is a necessary agent in the economy of human evolution; but if by rebel we mean the sheer iconoclast, the mere or in the main destroyer—and the word, especially since it is given preference, does carry that connotation—then the sentence loses most of its truth or value and becomes only a shibboleth or slogan.

The old, fossilised or rotten past has to be destroyed

and ruthlessly eradicated, no doubt: but, how is it to be done and who will do it? By a simple process of sledge-hammering—breaking, burning? By anybody who cares to do it? It does not require much sense or intelligence to see that that is not the ideal nor even the most effective way of doing the thing. The best way to destroy, the wise say, is to construct. Look at Nature, how she is going about the thing. Something is crumbling, precisely because something is growing within or behind. It is the drive of a living growth in secret that pushes a limb no longer necessary or useful to decay and death. Man too in his work of reformation or regeneration should learn that lesson, whether in respect of his individual or of his collective growth and evolution. Discover the truth that is to replace the old, live it intensely and wholly—the old past will automatically slip down like old clothes or drop like yellow sapless leaves.

Further Monsieur Gide says, God is nowhere, he has to be created. If he means that God is not anywhere in the manifest physical world, especially, the physical world of today, it is true, though here too partially true. God is never truly absent; even in and through this dismal and distressed age of ours he is ever present, a living power of abounding Grace—even if behind the veil, even if not patent to the sense-bound observer. Still God has to be made patent, established concretely in the physical world also, in the everyday normal human affairs. But, again, how to do it? And who is to do it? You or I in our complete, at best half-lit hazy ignorance?

By running blindly full-tilt against any and all atheism and denial and egoism and arrogance, shouting at them, pointing the finger of scorn at them or being physically violent upon them? It were best if we moved with as much vigour against our own selves, against the ungodly within us. If one begins seriously at home, in dealing with oneself one will be best equipped to deal with the others and the world, in the process of new creating in oneself one will be in a position to find out exactly what lies in the way of a new creation outside.

A deeper sense of truth and rectitude says: you have no right to break unless you have the power to make. Even an illusion you cannot and should not break if you do not know how and what to replace; you will only replace it by a greater and more disastrous illusion, you must yourself have the full vision of the truth, you must yourself realise and establish it in yourself, in your inner being as well as your outer personality. Then only you will have secured full authority (Ramakrishna's *chapras*, badge) to make and unmake. If you have not the needed authority, then you must obey implicitly one who possesses the authority.

This is a counsel of perfection, one might say, and human things are not usually done in this way. But precisely because things are not done in this way that human affairs are always in a muddle and continue to be more or less the same eternal merry-go-round. It is only when things are done in the ideal way that the ideal can be established fully, the perfect remedy obtained.



## X

### EVOLUTION OR SPECIAL CREATION

THE point is still being debated and, it seems, is still debatable whether evolution is truly the fact behind the origin of species or is it special creation. The latter, we know, was the old-world pre-Copernican theory advocated by theologians and religious minds. It was thoroughly discredited and demolished by the new illumination that Science brought in with the nineteenth century. Till lately it was considered as a pure superstition and to be its advocate would be nothing but blind bigotry. But evidently things in Nature are not so simple; what at one time is brushed aside as a meaningless futility comes back later with a meaning and suggestiveness and truth of reality. We were once laughing at the corpuscular theory of light advocated by the great Newton and putting on a patronising air at the frailty of an otherwise mighty intelligence. But the tables are now turned and we accept it as an undoubted fact when Planck says today that a light ray consists also of particles (quanta) of light. Similarly if in some scientific quarter a doubt has arisen as to the absolute and exclusive truth of the principle of evolution and if the old conception of special creation is exhumed for fresh consideration, well, one should not be astonished at the turn over.

The most serious lacuna in the concept of evolution, at least in the Darwinian form of it, is, as is well-known, the missing link. The transition stage between one form of life and another, between one species and its higher evolute is always absent, has left no trace of any kind and it is a matter of any man's guess. So the theory of mutation, *saltum*, sudden change, has been advanced. But that only restates the fact, clinches the matter, but does not explain it. If a sudden and thorough change is possible, if one object can be transformed into something quite different and unpredictable, one can as well call it special creation. That would, some might say, be facing the fact squarely.

According to the Yogic or occult view of things, however, the two conceptions that human mind sets against each other need not be and are not contradictory. Indeed both are true and both are factors working out the progress of life. Evolution is a movement upward, the urge of consciousness to grow and expand and rise to a higher and greater articulation: the change follows a scale of degrees. But there comes a point in the progressive march when a change of degree means a change of kind and the phenomenon presents itself as a sudden, unforeseen mutation. This is due to the fact that there happens at the moment, in answer to a last call as it were from below, a descent of consciousness from the higher into the lower. All the grades of being or consciousness are always there in the cosmic infinity, only it is a matter of gradual manifestation in the physical

world. The higher scales are kept in the background, the march of life starts from the lowest, the material rung. One by one they manifest or descend, formulate themselves in the lower as these grow and rise and get ready to receive the descent. The gap or missing link means the irruption of a new principle or mode of consciousness, the bursting of the cocoon, as it were, at the end of the period of gestation in the previous mode. Thus we can say that in the beginning there was only Matter and Matter was being churned until a point of tension or saturation was reached when Life precipitated and became embodied and evident in Matter. In the same way, out of a concentrated incubation that Life underwent, it brought down Mind from the hidden mind-plane and the vegetable kingdom gave birth to the animal. Latterly when Intelligence and self-consciousness descended, it was Man that appeared on earth.

Looked at from below, as the lower marches forward and upward, the scene presents itself as Evolution, growth, Nature's gradual unfolding of herself: looked at from above, as the higher seems poised and descends when the time and occasion are ready, creation appears as a series of special intervention. Both movements are facts of Nature and implement each other.

## XI

### AN EVOLUTIONARY PROBLEM

*The London Times Literary Supplement* (July 27, 1946), in the course of a critical estimate of Bernard Shaw, writes:

"Mr. Shaw pats Lamarck on the back and accepts his theory that 'living organisms change because they want to'.

If you have no eyes and want to see and keep trying to see, you will finally get eyes. If, like a mole or subterranean fish, you have eyes and don't want to see, you will lose your eyes. If you like eating the tender tops of trees enough to make you concentrate all your energies on the stretching of your neck, you will eventually get a long neck like the giraffe.

But the metaphysics here are surely false. If a species has no eyes, has never possessed eyes, is unconscious of sight, or of the fact that there are sights to be seen, is unaware of any necessity for sight, how can that species desire sight or will itself into the possession of eyes? We can only will what we need."

I am afraid the metaphysics here found fault with is not surely false, it is the critic's appreciation that is at fault. The metaphysics is perhaps somewhat too physical in its imagery and terminology, that is to say, graphic in the Shavian manner, but the matter seems to us quite all right. What the critic fails to understand is that it is not the conscious idea in the mind that brings about its concrete realisation. What is there at the outset in

the evolutionary urge is a life force, blind, no doubt in the usual sense, but driving towards greater expression and articulation, towards a more and more conscious and clear perception of ends and means. Thus, for example, the root shoots out of the earth into the open air, throws up the stem and the stem grows upward and branches out into tendrils and leaves: all that process means an ardent yearning, a "wanting", to rush and plunge into the light and air above. The root or the seed underground does not see the light or air, how then does it move towards that? In fact, it is not necessary to have seen eyes, known what eyes are in order to grow the vision and the organ. We will what we need: yes, but what we need is not always or wholly covered by the conscious mind's conception of it. The needs lie deep down and most of them are unconscious; and at a time, at a stage when conscious mind has not yet evolved, it is a secret sense of the life-force, an instinctive orientation to what is useful and needful that infallibly guides the living organism.

Evolution is purposive: not because it has had always a mentally conscious aim before it, for the mind is a later production, but because the purpose is latent within as an involved force and is gradually unrolled and worked out. It is not as indeterminate and unpredictable as Bergson would have it; it has a veiled determination, a disposition implanted in the very movement by the stress of an apparent unconsciousness seeking conscious formulation. We might also say, reverting to our analogy, that

the seed sprouts towards light and air, because it had absorbed light and air in its original formation out of the flower blooming in the open space: the impress of that contact is taken into the very grain of its substance, in its chromosomes and genes—it remains there as an indelible memory (although not of the human cerebral variety). It is no wonder therefore that an inner urge towards light gradually leads towards the formation of the instrument for sight. The organism may have no notion of the external eye, but the external eye is only a projection of an inner eye that lies imbedded in the sensory continuum. Behind the physical eye there is a subtle eye, the eye of the eye, as the Upanishad calls it, the secret gaze of an involved consciousness in the apparently unconscious.

The whole articulation of the external organism is, as we know, contained in a secret disposition of elements within the cell—not in the way, as was once supposed, viz., that a whole full-grown tree lies in a miniature form within the seed and growth simply means a gradual enlargement of that form—but that there is a pattern of ultimate particles—vital quanta—a rhythm and vibration of life energy, that is the origin, the formal and efficient cause, of the material form. Deeper still, behind the blind instinctive urge of life, the unconsciousness that is the inertia of matter, there is a consciousness, a vision, a supernal self-conscious energy that inspires, guides, fashions the whole evolutionary scheme in the large as well as in all details.



## XII

### MAN TO BE SURPASSED

"MAN is a thing that shall be surpassed". This burning phrase of Nietzsche has unsealed many eyes: it has also scalded and frightened others. It has been hailed by many as the motto, the mantra of the age to come; it has been denounced equally as a false light, a lead of arrogance and egoism.

Erich Kehler (a Czech now become American citizen) in his book *Man the Measure* seeks to strike a balance, but as the title indicates, evidently leans more to the second, the reactionary, than to the original ideal. He posits that man's humanity is to be preserved and fostered, that is to say, his true humanity, that which distinguishes him from mere animality. The Greek ideal, according to Kehler, was an advance upon the animal man; it brought in the ideal of the rational man. And yet the Greek ideal, in spite of its acceptance of the whole man—*mens sana in corpore sano*—embracing as it did his physical, ethical and aesthetic development, laid on the whole a greater emphasis upon reason, upon rationalising, that is, ordering life according to a rational pattern. And then the Greek ideal was more for the individual; it was for the culture and growth of the individuality in man. Society was considered as composed of such individualised units. The degree of personal choice, of individual liberty, of free

understanding that a Greek citizen enjoyed marked the evolution secured by man out of the primitive society. Still the integral man is not the rationalistic man, even as he is not the mere biological man: and he is not predominantly individualistic either.

Yes, man's true humanity, says Kehler, almost echoing Nietzsche, consists precisely in his capacity to surpass himself. The animal is wholly engrossed in its natural nature and activities; but man is capable of standing back, can separate from his biological self, observe, control and direct. For him "existence" truly means (as the Existentialist declares today) *ex + sistere* or *ex + stare*, to stay or stand outside. That is the surpassing enjoyed by him and demanded of him—going beyond one's natural or normal self. But there is a danger here. For there can be a too much surpassing, a going away altogether, as religion or spirituality usually enjoins. Christianity, for example, which is in many senses a movement contrary to the Greek spirit, taught a transcendence that was for luring or driving the human soul away from the world and men towards an extra-terrestrial *summum bonum*.

That is a false light, a wrong lead. Surpassing should not mean going beyond—up and away; it means rather coming out of one's self and going abroad, finding one's kinship and unity with others, with the world around. The individualisation of the self—given by the Greek culture—was the first step; the next step in evolution is the "collectivisation" of the self. It is not in the Nazi or Bolshevic sense that we have to understand the word:

it does not equate with totalitarianism. The peril is there, no doubt.

But there was danger in individualism too: and the Greek polity suffered from it. For individualism meant clash of personalities: indeed rivalry, ambition, intolerance, arrogance, all the violent or vulgar movements of egoism occupy a good part of the life story of the old-world peoples trained in the classical culture. On the other hand, modern collectivism tends towards a uniform levelling down of all individual eccentricity. But dangers apart, the truth of either conception, ingrained in human nature, has to be recognised and accepted. A humanity composed of developed and formed individuals living in broad commonalty—that is the highest achievement the present author holds before mankind.

Mr. Kehler does not define very clearly the nature and function of this commonalty: but it almost borders on what I may call human humanism, something in the manner of the other modern humanist Albert Schweitzer. Two types of humanism have been distinguished: man-centred humanism and God-centred humanism. Kehler's (and even Schweitzer's) humanism belongs very much to the first category. He does not seem to believe in any transcendent Spirit or God apart from the universal totality of existence, the unitary life of all, somewhat akin to the *Vie Unanime* of Jules Romains.

The limitation of such a human ideal is for us evident. We demand a total surpassing of man, although that does not mean a rejection of man. Unless human life is built

upon foundations quite other than what they are now, we say there can be no permanent or radical remedy to the ills it suffers from. Hence we are for utter transcendence; for, the highest height it is possible for the consciousness to reach and the being to dwell in, even the experience of Brahman or unmitigated Absolute of the Mayavadin or the Zero, Shunyam of the Buddhist not excluded. Since it is there that the true foundations of creation lie hidden and it is from there that a new world has to be recreated, a new humanity reshaped. The very stuff of human nature has to be changed, not only what is considered as bad in it but what is valued as good also. For beyond good and evil is Nature Divine. Man has to find out this divine nature and dissolve his human nature into that, remould it, reshape it in that pattern. So long as human consciousness remains too human, it will be always branded with the bar sinister of all earthly things. Man has to grow into the immortal seated within mortality, into the light that shines inviolate on the other side of the darkness we live in. That immortality, that light one has to bring down here on earth and in ourselves, and out of it build a new earth and a new human self and life.

### XIII

#### LONE TO THE LONE

THE quintessence of spirituality is said to consist in, as has been described in the famous phrase of the Alexandrine mystic philosopher Plotinus, *the flight of the lone to the lone*. God is a solitary and the other solitary is the soul: so when one solitary mingles with the supreme solitary, the result is utter solitariness, which is spirituality at its apex, its highest height. The world, in this view, is an excrescence, an epiphenomenon—Illusion, Maya. God is the transcendent Reality, above and beyond all manifestation, negating all multiplicities and relativities of creation: He is indivisible, single, absolute unity—*ekamevādvītiyam*, *kevalam*—*neha nānāsti kincana*. The human being too is not in reality the individual person bounded within a body, life and mind formation, standing in reciprocal relations with such other formations; his inner core of truth and substance is a unitary centre of consciousness—*angūṣṭhamātra puruṣaḥ*—which is aloof and apart from his aparent and assumed personality and has no dealings with such personalities. God has no *upādhi*, phenomenal qualification, neither has the soul of man. Therefore in his spiritual aspiration, man has to divest himself of all the outer growths that cover and bury his soul: with the clear unmixed vision of his pure soul he has to look straight into the face of the Divine Tran-

scendent, shredded too of its cosmic vesture, and rise from the station of ignorance, this level ground of clay to which it is pinned, and soar and fly and merge into the pure reality of the pure Spirit. Therefore it is said, naked we come into the vale of tears and naked we have to go back to our home. Or in terms of another imagery, it is the pure pouring into the pure, the full mixing into the full.

Some mystics and philosophers recently come into vogue (inspired or encouraged by the Christian or the Buddhist way of Realisation) have emphasised this outlook. But it has also been counterbalanced by another way of spiritual growth and fulfilment: we may call it the modern way, for it has been a pronounced characteristic of the modern consciousness. We referred in our previous number to the Existentialist who has attracted so much attention in these days, the linchpin of whose philosophy is the value of the individual person, especially the individual personal in relation to each other. Kierkegaard, the Danish mystic, from whom this school is supposed to originate, speaks of the Absolute as the Single One that excludes and annuls all "others", the crowd. He lays especial emphasis upon complete solitariness and total renunciation as the very condition, *sine qua non*, of the soul's spiritual journey and yet characterises the *singleness* of the one in terms that make of it an essential whole, an integer. Man must isolate himself from his phenomenal being, certainly—as the *neti neti* formula enjoins—but also he must first find or become his real self, realise his true individuality before he can reach God, the Divine Self,



identify himself with the Transcendent. It is only a freely and truly formed individual being that can give itself to the Divine or become one with it. This true individuality is indeed a solitary being away and apart from the crowd of personalities that surround it—it has been called by the Indian mystics, the Purusha in the heart, no bigger than the thumb, the Dwarf Godhead (*Vāmana*).

When one is a member of the crowd, he has no personality or individuality, he is an amorphous mass, moving helplessly in the current of life, driven by Nature-force as it pleases her: spiritual life begins by withdrawing oneself from this flow of Ignorance and building up or taking cognizance of one's true person and being. When one possesses oneself integrally, is settled in the armature of one's spirit self, he has most naturally turned away from the inferior personalities of his own being and the comradeship also of people in bondage and ignorance. But then one need not stop at this purely negative poise: one can move up and arrive at a positive status, a new revaluation and reaffirmation. For when the divine selfhood is attained, one is no longer sole or solitary. Indeed, the solitariness or loneliness that is attributed to the spiritual status is a human way of viewing the experience: that is the impression left on the normal mind consciousness when the Purusha soars out of it, upwards from the life of the world to the life of the Spirit. But the soul, the true spiritual being in the individual, is not and cannot be an isolated entity; the nature of the spiritual consciousness is first transcendence, no doubt,

transcendence of the merely temporal and ephemeral, but it is also universalisation, that is to say, the cosmic realisation that has its classic expression in the famous mantra of the Gita, *he who sees himself in other selves and other selves in his own self*. In that status "own" and "other" are not distinct or contrary things, but aspects of the one and the same reality, different stresses in one rhythm.

The flight then represents the freedom, the movement in height of the soul; but there is also the other, the horizontal movement leading to expansiveness and comprehension. One is transcendental, the other global or cosmic. First we have to reject, reject the false formations one by one (sheath by sheath, as it is described in the Upanishads) and arrive at the purest core of truth and reality; but again we have to come back, take up a new, the true formation. What was renounced has to be reintegrated in the divine becoming. While we are in Ignorance, our relations with men and the world are false and ignorant, but once we attain our true self, we find the same self in men and things and we have no more revulsion for them—*tato na vijigupsate*.

## XIV

### THE URGE FOR PROGRESSION

IN the process of the expression and embodiment of this innermost truth, the first necessary condition is, as we have said, sincerity, that is to say, a constant reference to the demand of that truth, putting everything and judging everything in the light of that truth, a vigilant wakefulness to it. The second condition is *progression*. It is the law of the Truth that it is expressing itself, seeking to express itself continually and continuously in the march of life; it is always unfolding new norms and forms of its light and power, ever new degrees of realisation. The individual human consciousness has to recognise that progressive flux and march along with it. Human consciousness, the complex of external mind and life and body consciousness, has the habit of halting, clinging to the forms, experiences and gains of the past, storing them in memory, agreeing to a minimum change only just to be able to pour the new into the old. But this conservatism, which is another name for *tamas* is fatal to the living truth within. Even like the *élan vital* so gloriously hymned by Bergson, the inmost consciousness, the central truth of being, the soul *élan* has always a forward looking reference. And it is precisely because the normal instrument of the body

the truth and its simple living marks the law or rhythm of that Truth. "

A soulful man, whatever he says, thinks, feels or acts, always embodies wholly the Divine. Not that because he says, acts, thinks or feels in a certain manner that he has attained perfection or is in dyanmic union with the summit and integral consciousness. As the Mother brings out the distinction, although in a somewhat different context, the perfect soul-existence cannot be judged by the forms it takes, the forms themselves have to be judged by the soul-existence.

## XVI

### SUCCESS AND ITS CONDITIONS

Success in any undertaking can come only by the application of a quiet force. A force that is restless, shaky, nervous always misses the mark. A steady, controlled, almost rigid hand alone can shoot the missile that hits the bull's eye. The Upanishad speaks of being one and indivisible with one's aim, even like an arrow-head fixed into the target. An undivided concentration naturally means an absolute unruffled tranquillity.

How is this tranquil energism to be secured? What are the conditions that produce and maintain and foster it? The first condition is self-confidence. One must have trust in oneself, a full faith that one is able to do the thing. A pessimist, a half-hearted doubter, a defeatist can never achieve anything in the world. All successful men, whatever share they agreed to give to chance, had always immense hope and faith. Against failures, against tremendous odds they have always persisted, always believed in their star. Like Caesar they said not only to themselves but also to others: "Thou carriest with thee the fate of Caesar." Only, of course, the self-confidence sometimes overrides itself, becomes conceit and arrogance. Then you go beyond your depth, tempt the fates beyond your control and open the door to failure. So along with self-confidence, there must be an element of sobriety; we will

call it modesty—true modesty that can perceive the extreme limit at least of the possible and the impossible. Such modesty itself is a source of serenity and calmness in the mind and nerves. Imagine a lion couchant, aiming at its prey. The prey remains spell-bound, unable to run away. The lion's gaze is fixed upon its victim; its hypnotism consists in a calm and absolute self-confidence, an unshakable assurance that its will shall prevail.

Man's self-confidence is, as I have said, apt to overleap itself; it turns into self-conceit and blind and obstinate complacency. An animal by instinct knows how to remain within its limits and continue to be unfailing in its judgment: it is domestic animals that begin to get muddled in their instinctive movements. With the growth of the mental self-consciousness man loses the sense of his limits and always seeks to exceed himself. And therefore failure and fall have become almost his constant companions. His efforts are not commensurate with his powers. Hence in his case modesty is a great asset and a desideratum. Modesty, we said, is the consciousness of one's limitation—not overestimating oneself, nor for that matter underestimating oneself: it is judging exactly what one is.

That, however, is the case with the normal man with the normal nature. But precisely because of the growth of self-consciousness, man has developed the power to increase his powers: he can extend the boundaries of his capacities and possibilities. He need not confine himself within the dimensions that he naturally possesses or acquires in the normal course of his growth. He can follow



an abnormal or extraordinary course of growth, break through his limits and establish contact with the vast and the illimitable and the incalculable, even the very fount and origin of all power. That is the gift of Yoga, spiritual discipline.

Yoga brings in a different line and scheme of life. For it is built upon soul-consciousness, upon Divine Nature which means another history of individual destiny. Even then tranquillity and self-confidence are at the basis of a Yogic life also and a new degree of modesty and humility.

## XVII

### THE BASE OF SINCERITY

THE great, perhaps, the greatest secret of life—*uttamam rahasyam*, to quote the familiar phrase of the Gita—consists in finding, in coming in contact with and remaining in permanent contact with this centre of our being, the nucleus of our living. And curiously, if we are alert and observant enough, we discover that this mysterious thing is not very far to seek. There is hardly any developed human being who has not had, some time or other in the course of his life, a feeling or perception that he is free, he is happy in a miraculous way, as if he is above or away from the vicissitudes of external life, nothing touches him and he is unique and self-fulfilled, he is on the summit of his being, in the topmost form of his nature. However fugitive that experience may be, it is the kernel of his being that reveals itself for a moment, the central consciousness that moves, guides, inspires and supports his whole life—and all his other lives too—although till now from behind the veil. That is what we call the Divine in the individual, the Inner Controller, *antaryāmin*, the conscious being ever seated within the heart, *puruṣa sadā hydi sanniviṣṭa*.

Once this centre has been aspected—in whatever man-

ner, to whatever degree, even faintly and feebly—one has always to come back to it, as the mariner to the pole-star, try to connect all external happenings as well as one's inner movements with this fountain-head. That is to say, one must think, feel or do nothing that is contrary to the truth it is, that is not in accord with its rhythm and law: indeed one must always endeavour to think only that thought, feel only that feeling, do only that act which is the spontaneous and inevitable outcome and expression of that innermost and topmost reality.

That is the definition of sincerity: to be transparent and single-pointed to your soul-consciousness, to your deity. And that also is the only way by which there can be realised in you, the highest and largest, the most intimate and absolute harmony you are capable of and that is demanded of you. The perfect organisation of the individual life can be obtained in and through the harmony inherent in the central reality, in the natural order of its activities. In the scheme or pattern laid out in the inmost consciousness, each element has its own orbit and its own quantum of energy, each force its allotted function: the will in each is exactly commensurable with what should be the expression in it of the total reality, each is the whole and rounded articulation of an aspect or figure put forth by the central truth in its self-display. As in a musical theme, each note has a definite pitch, amplitude, tone which give it its perfect form in order to constitute a common pattern—the highest pitch, the largest amplitude or the most vibrant tone is not needed, not only not

needed, would be a bar on the contrary—even so, the individual man when he attains perfection realises in himself a harmony which gives the true expression of all his limbs, the fullest and fairest expression of each and every one as demanded by the divine role destined for him.

## XVIII

### PROCESS OF PURIFICATION

THERE are three well-marked stages in the process of the purification of nature and surrender to the Divine. When one has made up one's mind finally to take to the path of spiritual life and to turn one's back upon the life of ignorant nature, one enters at the outset into a phase of divided consciousness and life. It is the stage when one cries, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." One feels an inner aspiration and devotion and even freedom and purity and wider consciousness, but actually in the practical world, he follows the old nature, acts under the pressure of Ignorance and the Ripus. You are a mundane man with profane habits—and yet within, when aloof, you are in contact with the deeper and larger breath of the Spirit. The next stage is one of external control and of modification of behaviour. You have the inner consciousness of the spirit grown strong in you and you are no longer a helpless prey to the physical outbursts of inferior nature: a kind of brake has been put upon the outgoing passions. Still at this stage the surges of passion are there within, inside the wall of control, as it were. The pressure and demand of the Spirit has brought about a deadlock in the ignorant movements of the outer nature, although the physico-vital and vital support behind has not been wholly purified and conti-

nues in its old way, expressing itself in veiled and sublimated acts and in dreams and imaginations. The vital support even when it does not express itself in grosser physical movements, even when it is self-contained, yet maintains its old *taste* for them. Finally, when this taste even goes away (that is the suggestion in the beautiful and luminous phrase of the Gita, *rasavarjam*), then only one rises into the integral and unadulterated life of the Spirit. Till that final consummation happens, the period of interregnum is a great occasion for training and experience. It is of considerable interest also from the standpoint of occult knowledge.

There are two types—which mean two stages—of control. You can control your nature by the force of your will, as one does a wicked horse by means of the toothed bit. But this control is precarious and the clearing or purification effected is only skin-deep. At the slightest weakening of the will or a momentary lack of vigilance, you may find yourself in the very midst of a volcanic eruption of passions. Even otherwise, even if there happens no external outburst, the burden or pressure of the ignorant nature is always there and the struggle or tension, although thrown into the background, obstructs the nature, does not give it the free and spontaneous higher poise of the spirit. The other control comes from the inmost being, from the spiritual self itself: it is automatic and it is occult in its action and therefore naturally effective. When the Spirit, the Inner Control (*Antaryami*) works, it happens that even if the desires are there,



the occasions for their satisfaction are withdrawn from you. As the Mother says, some people who are destined for the spiritual life lose all earthly props whenever they wish to lean upon them, they lose their endeared objects whenever they are eager to cherish them. At a certain stage of the growth of the inner consciousness, the demand of the soul makes it impossible for the vital (or physico-vital), so far as it is unpurified and unprepared, to secure its objects: even if the lips yearn, the cup is taken away. The circumstances themselves yield to the pressure of the inner being and conspire, as it were, to withhold and remove all dangerous contacts. The being has not to say, "Lead me not into temptation", for the temptations by themselves slip away. That is the earlier poise of the interregnum we are describing; the next poise comes when the wish-impulses, the subjective vibrations also melt and disappear. Then there appear no such things as temptations. Objects, events, circumstances that might have acted in that role come and go, but the being remains indifferent and unruffled, because suffused with the delight of another contact. The detachment from the worldly is secure and absolute because the being has found its attachment to the Divine. That is the beginning of the integral spiritualisation of the nature.

## XIX

### SWEET ADVERSITY

"So long we lived in anxiety, now at last we are going to live in hope." So said the delicious French playwright Tristan Bernard when the Germans came in, occupied Paris, arrested and imprisoned him (in the World War No. I). A noble truth nobly said by a noble soul thrown into the very midst of danger and calamity. Indeed, a danger is a danger so long as it is away and has not reached us. It is the menace, the imminence that causes more fright and upsetting than the thing itself. For it is imagination that enlarges and intensifies the object and makes of us craven cowards. The uncertainty hangs like a pall and casts a disabling influence upon the mind and nerves: one does not know what exactly to do, since the full situation is not presented or grasped and a fearful speculation becomes the only occupation.

But once the danger is right upon us and we are inside the jaws of death, there is an end to all speculation and anxiety: there are then two issues possible. One is that of absolute helplessness and hopelessness, of an unquestioning resignation, a quiet bowing down to the inevitable and implacable destiny. Many a victim on the gallows felt like that: an incredible quietness seized them in their last moments. Very often it is the

quietness of the shadow of Death—a supreme inertness, *tamas*, coming over and possessing. But there is another issue, a more luminous egress. When all uncertainty is set at rest as to the inevitability of the calamity, when circumstances have really besieged us in their unshakable steel-frame and we are doomed obviously, it is then that comes the chance for the hero-soul to stand out and declare its freedom and immortality—deny and strive to reverse the obvious.

Man has something in him which is irrepressible in the worst of circumstances, which can and does live outside and beyond their attacks and menaces. Adverse circumstances—the more adverse the better—are God-sent in that sense, because they tend to throw us back upon ourselves, upon our inner truth and reality, which otherwise we would not have known or recognised. And it is the nature of that truth and reality to be free and happy and hopeful absolutely. And the consciousness which possesses that temper and vibration is master of an energy, a force of execution—a will and power to do the miracle.

To live in hope, to work in hope is not merely to live in illusion and to work for a chimera. On one consideration, to live otherwise, in hopelessness, cannot cure matters, even if the matter is truly and really as dark as it looks. To view a matter of fact solely and wholly in the matter of fact way does not give the right perspective of things, a proper appreciation of appearance and reality. It is well-known that often we project our imagination

and apprehension upon the external world and bring about or help to bring about results that were only a possibility. Our fear calls for the object feared and makes it a reality. Apart from that, however, and on a deeper consideration, to live in hope is to react against the danger apprehended, to call in a help and power that is or can be always at our disposal, which can not only console but save. Even if death be the end and there is no escape, yet we would be freed from the wounds and scars that it inflicts upon our being with its ignorance and unconsciousness, we would learn to pass over luminously and in the full freedom of the spirit.

Hope is the image of the soul's prophetic vision. It is not just a way of escape from present sorrows, but a bridgehead leading to victory and fulfilment.

## XX

### THE SOUL IN ANGUISH

It is very interesting to observe how in the modern epoch depths of consciousness are being dug up and laid bare to the common gaze, even like the archeological finds of great antiquity and of immense value that are springing surprise after surprise upon our present-day civilisation. In our inner explorations too we have often come to strike psychological veins of unusual importance and significance. It is natural to the Yogin to do so; for it is the business of his life. But even thinkers and philosophers who do not ostensibly lead the mystic life are arriving at judgments and conclusions that are not normally warranted or covered by the unaided activities of the human reason. That proves once more that man is not reason alone, that he has other faculties to go by even in the field of ordinary knowledge.

A range of mystics and philosophers or philosopher-mystics from Kierkegaard to Sartre have made much of the sentiment of "anguish". Naturally, it is not the usual feeling of grief or sorrow due to disappointment or frustration that they refer to; nor is it the "repentance" which is a cardinal virtue in the Christian spiritual discipline. Repentance or grief is for something amiss, for some wrong done, for some good not done. It has

a definite cause that gives rise to it and determinate conditions that maintain and foster it: and therefore it has also an end, at least the possibility of an ending. It is not eternal and can be mastered and got over: it is of the category of the Sankhyan or Buddhistic *dukhatraya-bhigata*—for that matter even the *lacrymae rerum* (tears inherent in things) of Virgil are not eternal.

But the new Anguish spoken of is a strange phenomenon: it is causeless and it is eternal. It has sprung unbidden with no antecedent cause or condition: it is woven into the stuff of the being, part and parcel of the consciousness itself. Indeed it seems to be the veritable original sin, pertaining to the very nature. Kierkegaard makes of it an absolute necessity in the spiritual constituent and growth of the human soul—something akin to, but deeper, because ineradicable, than the Socratic "divine discontent". Sartre puts it in more philosophical and rational terms, in a secular atmosphere as a kind of inevitable accompaniment to the sense of freedom and responsibility and loneliness that besets the individual being and consciousness at its inmost core, its deepest depth.

I was speaking of the depth, of the sounding of consciousness in present-day inquiries into human nature. Sartre's investigation links itself up with the eternal inquiry graphically and beautifully described in the famous parable of the Taittiriya Upanishad (III).

In his quest for Brahman, Bhrigu came in contact first of all with the material existence and so took Matter



to be the ultimate Reality. He was asked to move on and at the next step he met Life and considered that as Brahman. He was asked to move farther on and at the third stage he found Mind which then appeared to him as the Reality. He had to proceed farther and enter and pass through other higher formulations till finally he entered the highest expanse (*parama vyoman*). Now applying the parable to the situation today and the modern quest we can say that Science like Bhṛigu is at the first step—and, for some, stuck there contented like the Asura Virochana of another Upanishadic parable, although it has become fidgety and somewhat uncertain in recent times: some others—the “vitalist” scientists and philosophers—are in the second stage. And yet there is a third category, the idealist philosophers generally, who are emerging from the second into the third.

It seems that the School of Anguish is on the borderland between the second and the third stage, that is to say, the vital rising into the mental or the mental still carrying an impress of the vital consciousness. It is the emergence of the Purusha consciousness, the individual being in its heart of hearts, in its pure status: for it is that that truly evolves, progresses from level to level, deploying and marshalling according to its stress and scheme the play of its outward nature. Now the Purusha consciousness, as separate from the outward nature, has certain marked characteristics which have been fairly observed and comprehended by the exponents of the school we are dealing with. Sartre, for example, characterises this

being—*être en soi*, as distinguished from *être pour soi* which is something like dynamic purusha or purusha identified or associated with *prakṛti*—as composed of the sense of absolute freedom, of full responsibility, of unhindered choice and initiation. Indeed, Purusha is freedom, for in its own status it means liberation from all obligations to Prakṛiti. But such freedom brings in its train, not necessarily always but under certain conditions, a terrible sense of being all alone, of infinite loneliness. One is oneself, naked and face to face with one's singleness and unbreakable, unsharable individual unity. The *others* come as a product or corollary to this original *sui generis* entity. Along with the sense of freedom and choice or responsibility and loneliness, there is added and gets ingrained into it the sense of fear and anxiety—the anguish (Angst). The burden that freedom and loneliness brings seems to be too great. The Purusha that has risen completely into the mental zone becomes wholly a witness, as the Sankhyans discovered, and all the movements of his nature appear outside, as if foreign: an absolute calm and unperturbed tranquillity or indifference is his character. But it is not so with regard to the being that has still one foot imbedded in the lower region of the vital consciousness; for that indeed is the proper region of anguish, of fear and apprehension, and it is there that the soul becoming conscious of itself and separate from others feels lone, lonely, companionless, without support, as it were. The mentalised vital Purusha suffers from this peculiar night of the soul. Sartre's outlook is shot

through with very many experiences of this intermediary zone of consciousness.

The being immersed in Prakriti, as normally it is, in relation and communion with others, may entertain as a pleasure and luxury, the illusion of its separateness and freedom: it can do so at ease, because it feels it has the secret support of its environment, it is courageous because it feels itself in good company. But once it rises out of the environmental level and stands truly apart and outside it—it is the mental being which can do so more or less successfully—the first feeling is that of freedom, no doubt, but along with it there is also the uncanny sense of isolation, of heavy responsibility, also a certain impotence, a loss of bearings. The normal Cartesian Co-ordinates, as it were, are gone and the being does not know where to look for the higher multi-dimensional co-ordinates. That is the real meaning of the Anguish which suddenly invades a being at a certain stage of his ascending consciousness.

The solution, the issue out is, of course, to go ahead. Instead of making the intermediary poise, however necessary it may be, a permanent character of the being and its destiny, as these philosophers tend to do, one should take another bold step, a jump upward. For the next stage, the stage when the true equilibrium, the inherent reconciliation is realised between oneself and others, between the inner soul and its outer nature is what the Upanishad describes as Vijnana, the Vast Knowledge.

## XXI

### THE NATURE OF PERFECTION

PERFECTION is often understood to mean the highest or the utmost possible development, even if it be in one particular line or direction. That, however, can better be called success or achievement. True perfection is not an extreme growth, however great or commendable it may be: it is the harmony of an all-round growth, the expression of the unified total being. And yet this does not involve a stultification of any limb or a forced diminution of any capacity. Perfection does not consist either in the harmonisation of the utmost possible development of each and every capacity, attribute or power of being. First of all, it is not a possible ideal, given the conditions of existence and manifestation. Secondly, it is not necessary: perfection can be realised even otherwise.

How is the harmony to be brought about in the human system composed of so many different and discordant factors, forms and forces of consciousness? It is not possible if one tries to make them accommodate each other, tone down the individual acuties and angularities, blunt or cut out the extreme expressions and effect some sort of a compromise or a pact of goodwill. It is not the Greek ideal of the golden mean nor is it akin to the modern democratic ideal which lays down that each element

is free—to grow and possess—to the extent that it allows the same freedom to every other element. No, for true harmony one has to go behind and beyond the apparent divergences to a secret being or status of consciousness, the bed-rock of existence where all divergences are resolved and find their inherent and inalienable unity, their single origin and basis. If one gets there and takes one's stand upon that absolute oneness, then and then only the perfect harmony of all the diversities that naturally rise out of it as its self-expression becomes possible, not only possible but inevitable.

That bed-rock is one's inmost spiritual being, the divine consciousness which is at once an individual centre, a cosmic or universal field of existence and a transcendent truth and reality. With that as the nucleus and around it the whole system has to be arranged and organised: according to the demand of the will and vision composing that consciousness, life has to manifest itself and play out its appointed role. Its configuration or disposition will be wholly determined by the Divine Purpose working in and through it; its fullness will be the fullness of the Divine Presence and intention. The mind will be wholly illumined, the vital with it will become the pure energy of Consciousness and the physical body will be made out of the substance of the divine being: our humanity will be the home and sanctuary of the Divine.

## XXII

### GOD PROTECTS

THE protection that man naturally needs and asks for is that of life and property. It is, in the ordinary course of things, the duty of the State and society to give this protection. But sometimes the State or society is unable to do its duty as it should. In revolutionary epochs, when storm and turmoil are almost a natural occurrence, the individual has to turn upon himself, and it is then that many turn to God—they have been called *ārta-bhakta*, those who become devotees through affliction. Now the first question that comes up is why on earth should God care for the life and property of any individual. Life and death, loss and gain are dualities that form the warp and woof of human existence: God is not more partial to one limb of the pair than to the other. From God's standpoint, so also from the standpoint of a God-lover, the soul is immortal, as indeed the Gita says, and even if the body dies, the soul remains for ever, the body can be killed but not the soul—*na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. And as regards property, it is the ignorant who are attached to it; the man of God has no need of it, not only so, it is an obstacle in his way to meet God. Did not the Christ declare that a camel could pass through the eye of a needle, never a rich man enter the kingdom of Heaven. And Nachiketas too, a heroic



boy that he was, flung back into the face of Yama himself all the riches offered to him by the Lord of Death.

Have life and property then no value in the eye of God? To the divine consciousness are these things mere *māyā*, transient objects of ignorance, ties that bind the soul to earth and have to be cut away and thrown behind? We at least do not hold that opinion. We hold that life and property are valuable, they are significant: they become so in reference to the individual who has them. The life that is dedicated to the Divine, the life that is in some way connected with the higher consciousness, through which something of the world of light and delight comes down into our mortality acquires a special worth and naturally calls for divine protection. Likewise the property placed at the service of the Divine, which is used as an instrument for the Divine's own work upon earth, the Divine will surely protect, for it is then part of his grandeur and glory. *aiśvarya*. Life and property become indeed sacred and inviolable when they are put at the disposal of the Divine for his use in the fulfilment of the cosmic design. As we know, life and property under present conditions upon earth are possessions of the undivine forces, they are weapons through which God's enemies hold sway over earth. Therefore life and property that seek to be on God's side run a great risk, they are in the domain of the hostiles and therefore need special protection. The Divine extends that protection, but under conditions—for his rule in the material field is not yet absolute. The Asura too extends his



protection to his agents, and his protection appears sometimes, if not often, more effective; for the present world is under his domination and all forces and beings obey him; God and the godly have to admit his terms and work out their design on that basis.

The conditions under which the Divine's protection can come are simple enough, but difficult to fulfil completely and thoroughly. The ideal conditions that ensure absolute safety are an absolute trust and reliance on the Divine Force, a tranquillity and fearlessness that nothing shakes, whatever the appearances at the moment, the spirit and attitude of an unreserved self-giving that whatever one is and one has is God's. Between that perfect state at the peak of consciousness and the doubting and hesitant and timid mind at the lower end—that of St. Peter, for example, at his weakest moment—there are various gradations of the conditions fulfilled and the protection given is variable accordingly. Not that the Divine Grace acts or has to act according to any such hard and fast rule of mechanics, there is no such mathematical Law of Protection in the scheme of Providence. And yet on the whole and generally speaking Providence, Divine Intervention, acts more or less successfully according to the degree of the soul's wakefulness on the plane that needs and possesses the protection.

And yet there is another aspect of the thing that is to be taken into consideration. For in the supreme and ultimate view the world or creation is not divided between God and Asura: the Asura cannot be outside God's

infinity, he is there because permitted by him, indeed forms part of him and serves the divine purpose. Asura represents the hard dark passage through which the ignorant human soul cuts out its forward march: it is the crucible in which the growing consciousness is purified of its dross in order to regain the fullness of its divine quality and nature.

Finally, it must also be understood that because the divine protection is there upon whosoever belongs to the Divine, this protection should not be taken to mean exclusively the preservation of the individual's physical life and its accessories. Divine protection, in its true and real sense, means the soul's welfare so that nothing can bring harm to it or be an obstacle to its happy growth and divine fulfilment. Protection gives the maximum of this welfare, the soul's self-increase and passage into perfect union with the Divine. And if death and privation—the giving up of a particular body and deprivation of life's possession—are necessary sometime or other for that growth and well-being—the contingency is not ruled out—well, that destiny too has to be accepted as part of the divine purpose, as protection itself. For after all life and life's powers have no intrinsic or absolute value of their own, their value depends upon the soul's need of them for its divine well-being.

## XXIII

### VENGEANCE IS MINE

ONE who seeks to live in God's consciousness cannot take the law into his own hands; he must leave it all to God. When he takes up the self-appointed task of remedying the situation, "resisting evil" as Christ termed it, he invites resistance from the other side which takes up its own counter-measures. The principle of *revanche* or *vendetta*, practised by nations and families, has not been a success, as history has amply proved. It is a see-saw movement, a vicious circle without issue. Not only so, the movement gathers momentum and increases in violence and confusion the farther it proceeds on its career. That is why Christ uttered his warning: and Buddha too declared that enmity cannot be appeased by enmity, it can be appeased only by the want of enmity. The truth is true not only in respect of two enemy forces of the same quality and on the same plane, but also with regard to the antagonism between higher and lower forces, between Good and Evil.

Do we then propose taking it all lying down, it may be asked? Is martyrdom then our ideal? Not so, for we do not believe that evil forces can be appeased or conquered or transformed by yielding to them, letting them free to have their own way. Otherwise Krishna would not have

enjoined and inspired (almost incited) Arjuna to enter on a bloody battle. Still forces, whether good or bad, are conquered or quelled or transformed truly and permanently by forces that belong not to the same level of being or consciousness, but to a higher one. Instead of working in a parallelogram of forces, we must take recourse, as it were, to a pyramid of forces. We know of the ideal of soul-force standing against and seeking to persuade or peacefully subdue brute force. It is not an impossibility; only we must be able really to get to the true soul and not a semblance or substitute of it. The true soul is man's spiritual or divine being—the consciousness in which man is one in substance and nature with God. It is not a mere thought formation, a mental and moral ideal. The only force that can succeed against a lower or undivine force is God's own force—and the success can be complete and absolute by the calling in or intervention of God's force in its highest status. Anything less than that will be no more than a temporary lull or adjustment.

The world is not changed in spite of many efforts, because man is always taking to human means, he is not allowing God to do God's work, but putting his own individual initiative in God's place, taking perhaps God's name on the lips with a secret, unconscious feeling that unless he himself does something nothing will be done—*kartāhamiti manyate*. Human means may achieve at its best a compromise, but no permanent solution: it is often the beginning of a worse situation, a greater disharmony and conflict—peace, it has been said, is only a preparation for war.

That vicious circle can be and has to be cut by the razor-blade consciousness of the aspirant to life divine who by the clear and tranquil energy of his tapas can call down a divine interference in mortal affairs.

The right attitude, then, for a sadhak who has to live dangerously in the world of today is to rise above the turmoils that surge around, to lift the consciousness to a serener height and aspire wholly towards the help and guidance from above, not to be moved by the blast that passes but hold himself firmly anchored upon the rock of ages, the Divine Grace. It is only then that the question can come of actually taking part in the battle of life—for it is then that you can act as God's agent or instrument. If you have to take to the field of actual battle you must first receive God's commission (*chaprash*—as Ramakrishna called it), even as Arjuna did.

## XXIV

### THERE'S A DIVINITY

THERE'S a Divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough-hew them how we will.

That is what man can do at his best, and even at his worst, *rough-hew*. Ignorant as he is, crude as his instruments are, he can do no better (and happily, no worse either). The ideals he has do not go very far, not much beyond his nose—they are limited by his senses, by his notions, by his immediate reactions to the circumstances of the moment. Even when the ends are commendable, the purposes decent, even when he is happily inspired, the materials and means at his disposal are crude and he uses them in a rough and ready manner. What he can achieve in this direction is not even a near but a very far approximate. And when he is otherwise inspired, when suggestions and impulsions come to him from the Hostiles, well, he hews his way, as Hitler did—and some others are doing now—to wrong ends; even there he does not succeed wholly, realises his design very partially, *grosso modo*. The stone club in the hand of the paleolithic man and the atom bomb in the hand of the modern are equally rough instruments, and the ends which they serve, whether for good or for evil, are also gross, neither far-visioned nor deep inspired, but superficial, strait and narrow, blindly

immediate. In either case, however, the Divine remains unaffected, firmly seated behind and in and through both, in and through their ignorant and perverse wills, it is His Will that works itself out and finds fulfilment in the end. Whether one is for or against the Divine, whether one is a god or an Asura, each in his own way contributes to the progressive realisation of the Cosmic Purpose. From a certain point of view even it may seem as though nothing helps or hinders, all are like a straw in a rushing current.

In our human reckoning, we seem to help the evolutionary course sometimes and sometimes hamper it with our efforts in so far as they are well directed or ill directed. In the practice of spiritual life too, one may be tempted to find a measurable proportion between the personal endeavour and the attainment. However that may be, at the end of all human efforts, the finishing touch always comes from the Divine Grace. Whether we succeed or fail, whatever be the human judgment of the situation, the Grace is sure to intervene in the final stage: to success it will bring more success giving it the peak of fulfilment, and failure too it will transmute into a glorious triumph.



## DIVINE INTERVENTION

WHAT we have named Intervention is also known popularly as Providence. It is the element of the incalculable and the unforeseen in Nature. Nature, in one respect, seems to be a closed circle: it is a rigid mechanism and its movements are very definite and absolutely fixed admitting of no change or variation whatsoever. That was the idea which governed our earlier scientists when they spoke of the Law of Nature. Law of Nature was to them, in the great Sophoclean phrase, something indelible and inviolable, immemorially the same which no man or god dare alter or disobey. Laplace, one of the pioneers of the scientific outlook, said, in fact, that he could very well imagine a mathematician recording and calculating all the forces that act and react in the world and from the present position of things foretell the time and place of each and every event in the cosmic field. The idea of Karma, or Kismet is a parallel conception in the domain of human nature and character. The chain reaction of cause and effect is rigorous and absolute, follows a single line of movement and possesses a rigidly predetermined disposition. The principle is equally applicable either to a phenomenon of the physical world or to that of man's inner consciousness.

But we have arrived today at a stage when this old-world view has perforce to be discarded. We can no longer take

Laplace seriously: for scientists themselves have established as a fact in physical Nature the indeterminacy of her movements, the impossibility of foretelling *à la* Laplace, not because of any deficiency in the human instrument but because of the very nature of things. Science is of course at a loss to explain the why or even the how of this indeterminacy. We say, however, that it is nothing but the intrusion of another, a different kind of force in the field of the forces actually at play. That force comes from a higher, a subtler level. Things and forces move in their ordinary round, according to the normal laws, bound within their present frame: but always there drops in from elsewhere an unknown element, a force or energy or impulse of another quality, which causes a shift of emphasis in the actual, brings about a change unaccountable and unforeseen. This is what is called miracle: the imposition of a higher law, a generic law governing subtler forms and forces upon an inferior and grosser sphere. And the higher or subtler the plane from which the new force descends—the plane can be anything between the one nearest to the material, the subtle physical or ethereal, and the one nearest to the other extreme, the spiritual—the greater will be the change in nature, quality and extent in the lower order. Such miracles, interventions, providential happenings are not rare. They are always occurring, only they do not attract attention. For it is these phenomena that are the real causes of all progress—cosmic as well as individual. Evolution is based upon this truth of Nature.

Man is not bound to the present pattern or complex of his nature and character: he is not irrevocably fixed to the frame—a Procrustean bed—given by the parallelogram of actual forces in or around him. Always he can call down forces or forces can descend into him from elsewhere and bring about a change, even a revolution in the mode and make-up of his character and nature and life. What we call “opening” in our Sadhana refers to this factor in our consciousness. It means the possibility of the descent of a higher force in our normal nature. Nature is not such a solid streamlined structure as not to admit of any interstices in it. We know of the comparatively vast spaces that separate atom from atom, the immense emptiness across which even the ultimate nuclear particles have to act upon each other. These are the loopholes in the great net and it is precisely through them that other forces percolate.

Man or Nature does not mark time; they are always on the march. The march would have been a thrice vicious circle, a mere issueless repetition of the old and the agelong but for this stress of a higher destiny behind. Great souls, Vibhutis, Avatars themselves are incarnations of such descents of higher and other forces from toprung sources.

The higher the source the greater, more substantial and permanent is the miracle. The miracle of miracles awaits the destiny of man on earth when the supreme consciousness of the Divine will descend here into Matter and mould all mortality into immortality.

## XXVI

### YOGA AS PRAGMATIC POWER

PEOPLE ask about the practical value of Yoga, but do not always wait for an answer. For, according to some, Yoga means "introversion", escapism—illusion, delusion, hallucination. And yet the truth of the matter is that Yoga is nothing but a downright practical affair, that its proof is in the very eating of it. To judge a Yogin you are to ask, as did Arjuna, a very prince of pragmatic men, how he sits, how he walks about—*kim āsīta vrajeta kim*. Indeed the very definition of Yoga is that it is skill in works. To do works and not to run away from them has always been the true and natural ideal even (and particularly, as we shall see,) for the spiritual man: the ideal is as old as the Upanishadic injunction, "Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years." The Yogi as a world-shunner was not always the only ideal or the highest ideal. To do works, yes; but, with skill, it is pointed out, that is to say, in the way in which they can be most effectively done. Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna the skill and shows how to apply it in the crudest and the most terrible action, viz., a bloody battle. But the skill that he demands, that is demanded of a Yogi, is not mere cleverness, craftiness or business policy including deceit, duplicity, sharpness; it means quite another spirit and faculty.

The ordinary man does works, achieves the object he aims at, through processes and means which, however powerful and effective, can be only moderately and approximately so. The amount of time and energy wasted is not proportionate to the result obtained. Man knows to utilise only a fraction of the energy collected in a system: the best of dispositions and organisation can harness just a modicum of the total stock, the rest is frittered away or locked up, whether it is vital energy or mental energy or even physical energy. That is because the central power that drives, the consciousness that controls the whole mechanism is of an inferior quality, of a lower potential. The Yogi views all energy as various forms and gradations of consciousness. So what he proposes, as a good scientist, is to lift up the consciousness and thus raise its potential and effectivity and minimise the waste. The higher the consciousness, the greater the effectivity, that is to say, the pragmatic value. As we rise in the scale there is less and less waste and greater and greater utilisation until we reach a climax, a critical degree, where there is absolutely no waste and where there is the utmost, the total utilisation of the whole energy. This supreme peak of consciousness that is absolute energy Sri Aurobindo names the Supermind. But on lesser levels too the spiritual consciousness is dynamic and effective—pragmatic in a way that the ordinary, limited, externally pragmatic consciousness cannot hope to be.

Sometimes it is urged that in the worldly affairs we should move according to the worldly procedure, other-

wise to import into mundane things spiritual values would merely confuse issues and end in failure in both the fields—"fallen from hence, lost from thence". Of course there are spiritual points of view that go ill with the mundane, as indeed there are mundane considerations that do not match with the spiritual. The two categories of view-point have been succinctly and luminously named by Sri Aurobindo as the Materialist Denial and the Ascetic Refusal. But there are other points of view, other lines of approach which seek a harmony and union between Spirit and Matter, that envisage the marriage of Heaven and Earth.

The fundamental truth to be noted is that the Spirit is power, not merely consciousness: indeed the very definition of the spirit is that it is consciousness-energy. And it is this consciousness-energy that is at the source of all cosmic activities. Man's action too springs from this original source, although apparently it seems to be caused by other secondary and derivative energies. As a matter of fact what these energies that seem to be actually in play do is not the origination but rather the deviation and diversion, a diminution and adulteration of the supreme energy, a lowering of the quality, the tone and temper of the dynamism. In other words, as we have already said, a thought force, a vital force, a nervous or physical force, all these are only lower, even minima values, more or less distant and deformed echoes of a true and absolute Power behind and above them all. These forces become powerful in proportion as they are instruments and functions of that

one mother energy. The truth is most beautifully illustrated in the story of Brahma and the gods in the Kena Upanishad. The gods conquered and were proud of their conquest; each thought that it was due to his own personal prowess that he conquered. But they were utterly discomfited and shamed when the Divine Power appeared and proved to them that but for this Power they would not be able even to tackle a blade of grass—Fire would not burn it, Water would not drench it, Wind would not move it.



## XXVII

### CAESAR VERSUS THE DIVINE

"RENDER unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." We do not subscribe to the motto. We do not admit that the world and the spirit are irreconcilables and incommensurables. On the contrary we assert their essential unity and identity. The spiritual force is not and need not be impotent or out of place in Caesar's domain. Rather it is the spiritual man who alone can possess the secret of mastering the forces that work out mundane things, perfectly and faultlessly.

But then, it may be asked, how is it that in the history of the world we find men of action, great dynamic personalities to be mostly not spiritual but rather mundane in their character and outlook? Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Chandragupta, Akbar, even Shivaji, were not spiritual personalities; their actions were of the world and of worldly nature. And the force they wielded cannot be described as spiritual, and yet how effective it was, what mighty changes it brought about in the affairs of men! And do we not actually see in the lives of saints and true spiritual souls that the force of the spirit, if force it can be called, moves away from the field of dynamism, turns towards a plane or height where all incentives and impulses to action fall silent and vanish in the end? The spiritual force is applied to negate all mundane activity, to get out

of the profane field of life. That is the skill of Yoga referred to in the Gita, that is how we are to understand the injunction to see "inaction in action", and "action in inaction".

Now there are several things to be distinguished here. First of all, even if it is accepted as true that in the past it is worldly men alone who were dynamically active in the world and that spiritual men were men of inaction whose role was to withdraw from the world, at least to be passive and indifferent with regard to mundane activities, that does not prove that it is an eternal truth and it is bound to be so ever and always. We must remember, if we admit the evolutionary character of Nature, of man and his growth and fulfilment, that spirituality in one of its forms at an early stage is and should be a movement of withdrawal, of diminishing dynamism in the sense of an "introversion". For when man still lives mostly in the vital domain and is full of the crude life urge, when the animal is still dominant in him (as the Tantrik discipline also points out), then a rigorous asceticism and self-denial is needed for the purification and sublimation of the nature. At that stage powers and dynamic capacities that often develop in the course of such discipline should also be carefully avoided and discarded; for they are more likely to bring down the consciousness to the ordinary level. But if that were the procedure and principle in the past, one need not eternise it into the present and the future. We believe mankind—a good part of mankind in its inner consciousness—has advanced sufficiently

on the vital level as to be able to give a new turn to his life and follow a different course of development. If he has not totally outgrown the animal, at least some higher element has been superimposed on it or infused into it and he can very well find the fulcrum of his nature in this superior station and order a new pattern of values and way of becoming. In other words, he need no longer altogether shun or avoid the so-called inferior forces—the physico-vital—in him, but try to control and utilise them for higher diviner purposes in the world, upon the earth. For the earth embodies after all the crucial complex. Whatever is to be done in the end has to be done here, effected and established here. The withdrawal was needed for a purification and husbanding of the forces so that they may be brought forth and applied at the proper time and place, it is *reculer pour mieux sauter*, to fall back in order to leap forward all the better.

In reality, however, to a vision that sees behind and beyond the appearances, spirituality—the force of the Spirit—is ever dynamic: the spiritual soul, even when it appears passive and inert, is most active not merely in the subtle psychological domain, but also in the material field. To the gross pragmatic eye Ramakrishna, for example, appears as a less dynamic personality, a less strong and heroic, if not positively weaker character than Vivekananda. Well, that is only face-value reading. Vivekananda himself knew and felt and said that he was only one of hundreds of Vivekanandas that his simple and modest-looking Guru could create if he chose. Even so a

Ramdas. Ramdas was not merely a spiritual adviser to Shivaji, concerned chiefly with the inner salvation and development of his disciple, and only secondarily with the gross material activities, the things of Caesar. The two domains are not separate at least in this case: the spiritual here directly and dynamically affects the physical. The spiritual guide is the dynamo—the matrix—of the power, the power spiritual; he wields and marshalls the hidden, the secret forces that are behind the outward forms and movements. And the disciple by his attitude of obeisance and receptivity becomes all the better a channel and instrument for the actual play and fulfilment of that force. A Govind Singh is another instance of spiritual power made dynamic in mundane things. And we always have the classical instance of Rajarshi Janaka.

Only, in the future a yet greater source of spiritual power is destined to be tapped and brought into play, into the plane of happenings, so that the material domain, the pattern of our actual day to day life will put on a different aspect; for a radiant consciousness will have breathed a new life into our very bodily cells.

## XXVIII

### MATTER ASPIRES

MATTER holds and expresses material energy, the subtlest and highest form of which is electric energy. Should Matter be confined to that alone or can it express or create, by and out of itself, non-material energy also? What about mental energy and thought movements—can they too be made a function of Matter?

For example, the computing machine. It has been developed to a marvellous extent. Not only big but complicated calculations are done by it, not only the four major arithmetical operations, but higher algebraic and trigonometrical problems too are tackled successfully. The electronic computer seems to possess a veritable mathematical brain.

It is asked now if the machine is capable of so much mathematics, may it not be capable also of poetic creation? The possibility has been discussed in a very lively and interesting manner in *The Hibbert Journal* (October, '49 and January, '50). The writer Sir Robert Watson-Watt thinks it is not impossible, indeed quite possible, for a machine to write, for example, a sonnet. Only the question will be with regard to the kind—the quality and standard—of the poetic creation. What will come out of the machine will depend upon what has been put into it, that is to say, what the brain that constructed it succeeded in transplanting into it. The writer after weighing the pros and cons arrives at the remarkable

and amusing conclusion that a machine built by a second class brain may succeed in producing a poem of third class merit, but it can never produce anything first class. To produce a first class poem through a machine at least a first class brain must work at it. But the pity is that a Shakespeare or a Milton would prefer to write straight away a poem himself instead of trying to work it out through a machine which may give out in the end only a second class or worse production.

I said it is an amusing discussion. But what is apt to be forgotten in such "scientific" discussions is, as has been pointed out by Rev. Trethowan in his criticism of Sir Robert, that all genuine creation is a *freak*, that is to say, it is a movement of freedom, of incalculable spontaneity. A machine is exactly the sum of its component parts; it can give that work (both as regards quantity and quality) which is confined within the frame and function of the parts. Man's creative power is precisely this that it can make two and two not merely four but infinity. There is a force of intervention in him which upsets the rule of the parallelogram of forces that normally governs Matter and even his own physical brain and mind. There is in him truly a *deus ex machina*. Poetry, art, all creative act is a revelation, an intrusion of a truth, a reality from another plane, of quite a different order, into the rigid actuality and factual determinism. Man's secret person is a sovereignly free will. A machine is wholly composed of actualities—the given—and brings out only a resultant of the permutation and

combination of the data: it is a pure deduction.

But there is another even more interesting aspect of the matter. The attempt of the machine to embody or express something non-mechanical, to leap as high as possible from material objects to psychological values has a special significance for us today and is not all an amusing or crazy affair. It indicates, what we have been always saying, an involved pressure in Matter, a force of consciousness secreted there that seeks release and growth and expression.

The scientific spirit, that is to say, man's inquiring mind, even when it specifically deals with Matter and material phenomena, cannot be made to confine, to limit itself to that region alone. It always overleaps itself and stretches beyond its habitual and conventional frontiers. The yearning of Matter for Light is an extraordinary phenomenon of Nature: physically speaking, we have reached the equation of the two. But that light is only a first signpost or symbol: it invites Matter towards higher and freer vibration. The old determinism has given place in the heart of Matter to significant eccentricities which seem to release other types of élan. When the brain-mind indulges in fabricating clay-images of God, it is not merely a foolish or idle pastime: it indicates a deep ingrained hunger. All this reveals a will or aspiration in Matter, in what is apparently dead and obscure (*acit*), to move and reach out towards what is living and luminous and supremely living and luminous (*cit*). Matter finally is to embody and express the Spirit.



## XXIX

### VALUES HIGHER AND LOWER

HERE is a dictum:

"An important discovery of modern metaphysics of value is that higher values *depend on* (italics are ours) lower values, i.e. owe their existence to lower values."

And a further gloss:

"We have got to take the lower values as base and *only after that* (italics are ours) aspire to achieve spiritual values in the light of changed time and mentality, (the last phrase also should be in italics)."

*Outlook*, Calcutta, Feb. 1950.

The problem in the final analysis is as ancient as man's first utterance. Which comes first, which is more important—Spirit or Matter, Body or Soul? Naturally, there have been always two answers, according to one's outlook. Some have declared *Annam* comes first, *Annam* is of primary importance, *Annam* is to be increased, *Annam* is to be worshipped: or again, earth is the firm status, be founded upon earth—*śariram ādyam*. On the other hand, it has also been declared that the Spirit comes first, the Spirit is the true foundation, the roots of creation are up there, not here below: if that is known, then only all this is known; it is by that Light all that

shines here shines. And if I miss that, what is the use of all this world of things?

In fact, however, the reality is a polarised entity: and both ends are equally necessary, for each is involved in the other. It is an unreal distinction, due to mind's prejudice and preference, that says one is first and the other next or last, one is more important and the other less. The true truth is that Spirit and Matter are one: for Spirit is Matter involved and Matter is Spirit evolved. The position can be stated in this form also: without Spirit, Matter does not exist; without Matter, Spirit does not manifest.

The balance is upset exactly when we say that the higher *depends on* the lower or that it comes after. Not only so, the statement is likely to involve an error, a mistaken view. If one has to make a distinction between higher and lower, inner and outer, it will be nearer the truth and fact to say that the lower depends on the higher, it is the inner reality that upholds and inspires the outer form: without this inner cohesive deity all the external frame would fall to pieces. It is not the contingencies of time and circumstances, of day-to-day existence that determine the nature and form of power of the soul and spirit. It is the pressure of the Inner Being, *antaryāmi*, that brings about the pattern and organisation of the outer life. At the summit of being, at the absolute point of consciousness the two are identical, absolutely one and the same. In the lower ranges as manifestation and variation begin, the two maintain their union and

harmony and mutuality so long as the consciousness retains its purity and the being is not invaded by Ignorance. Ignorance means the gradual predominance of the outer and the lower, till it reaches its last point in Inconscience where Matter is the only reality and everything is made to stand and depend on the grossest reality.

Even then, even from that nadir, let us consider things a little more closely. We have still consciousness left in us as human beings. Now, because man has a body and because he has to live and move in physical surroundings and circumstances, therefore body and physical conditions must necessarily come to his consciousness first in importance—this is not a valid argument nor a statement of fact. For man has and is something else besides: and this something else, in other words, the spiritual being, is quite a free and independent entity and can act as it wills ignoring and ignorant of the body and its circumstances. Whether one is poor or rich, successful or frustrated, happy or unhappy, one can always listen and follow the call of the Spirit.

It may be that for most men the physical life is of first and primary importance and they look upon the spiritual life, if ever they do, as a secondary pursuit; even as children consider food and play as the one thing needful, study or mental exercise quite a secondary or tertiary affair occupying a small side corner. This is because the taste for the higher life belongs to a more developed consciousness, not because it is something really dependent and derivative. Indeed, we do in fact see people—

individually or collectively (like the early Christians, for example)—suddenly becoming conscious of the burning reality of the Spirit, in the midst of and in spite of the most adverse and all-engrossing outer physical conditions, and follow it caring nothing. So the Christ directs: Follow Me, let the dead bury their dead; and the Indian Shastra enjoins: *Yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajat*—the day you feel unattached, that very day go out of the world and away.

To the spiritual seeker the higher values are the first things that come first: to the ordinary man it is otherwise, lower values come first and claim top-most priority. To the experience of the spiritual seeker one should give greater value, for he has the experience of both the values, while the ordinary man knows only of one variety. Naturally, as we have said, there is synthesis, a fusion of the two values; but that is elsewhere for the present, not actually here and now.

It is again a point of view to say that things are fundamentally values only, as "philosophers of value" seem to declare today. It would be equally true to say that masses are fundamentally energies or that particles are merely waves. The truth of the matter, here as elsewhere, is global—*ubhayameva*, in the famous phrase of the great Rishi Yajnavalkya. In other words, values and things are aspects, polarisations of one single reality. Things have values: things are values: things are also things.

Value refers to the particular poise or status, the mode

of being or function of a thing. In its ultimate formulation we can say it is the rhythm or force of consciousness that vibrates in an object, it is the *becoming* of the *being*: but becoming does not cancel being, it only activates, energises, formulates. The debate brings us back to the ancient quarrel between the Buddhists and the Vedantists, the latter posits *sat*, being or existence, while the former considers *sat* as only an assemblage of *asat*. The object and its function, the thing-in-itself and its attribute (the fire and its burning power, as the Indian logicians used to cite familiarly as an example) are not to be separated—they are not separated in fact but given together as one unified entity; it is the logical mind that separates them artificially.

### XXX

## THE NEW-WORLD-IDEAL

THAT man is not the term of evolution, that intellect is not the supreme expression of human capacity, that this mortal being shall acquire new faculties and powers and become a higher species with a good deal of his present limitations removed are some of the views regarding human destiny held today. At one end are religious and devout people or those who follow a faith and spiritual discipline and at the other end are hard-headed scientific people who go by the evidence of downright facts and figures. There are a considerable number among both the groups and also among all the gradations lying in-between who subscribe, although in various ways, to this *television* we speak of. Catholics who believe in the coming of the Messiah and physicists who believe in re-creation of Matter and Energy, not merely its disintegration, have been equally enthusiastic in upholding this New Faith. There is Berdyaev who is a Christian, there is Gerald Heard who is called a Neo-Brahmin and there is Lecomte du Noüy, the eminent French Biophysicist.

We see the movement accepted and advanced (if not even initiated) more in the West than in the East. That the world is a progressive and progressing phenomenon comes easily and naturally to the European mind. The

East has been habituated to a static view of things: if there is dynamism, it is mostly considered as a movement in a circle. The spiritual East with its obsessing experience of the Infinite and Eternal and Permanent, the Transcendent, found it unnecessary to attach that importance to the impermanent and finite which would give it a meaning and purpose and direction. Therefore we see in India those who advocate this new view are considered Europeanised and not following the authentic spiritual tradition of India.

We, of course, are not of the opinion that all possible revelations in the spiritual sphere have been made and done with even in India or that there cannot be fresh valuations of the old revelations or their applications in a new way. We believe in the words of the ancient Rishis who declared that dawns come endlessly in succession, today's dawn follows the path trod by the ancient ones and is the first of the eternal series to come in the future. Each dawn brings in a new and fresh revelation, a hope and vision looking into the future although linked in with the experiences of the infinite past.

That is why, while we give our support to this new effort of Europe, we agree and even insist that the hoary spiritual tradition of India has still something to teach us moderns, some light to give us in our present predicament. For, although, the ideal is generally admitted in many places, the way to it is not clear. Since Nietzsche spoke of the surpassing of man, many are taken up with the ideal, but the means to effect it remains yet to be discovered: it is



still under discussion, at least. As a matter of fact, the goal itself is none too clear and definite: sometimes we think of a saintly transformation of human nature, sometimes the growing power of Intuition, very vaguely and variously defined, replacing or supplementing intellect and thus adding a new asset to man's life and consciousness.

The crucial problem however lies, in a sense, in the way that the goal is to be reached, in the *modus operandi*. How is the higher status, whatever it is, to be brought down, made effective, be established here on earth and in life. Ideals there have been always and many; evidently we do not know how to go about the business and actualise what is thought and dreamed. About the new ideal too suggestions have been made with regard to the path to be followed to reach it and are being tried and tested. Some say a life of inner or ethical discipline, conscious effort on the part of each individual for his own sake is needed: the higher reality must be reached first by a few individuals, it cannot be attained by mass action. Others declare that personal effort will not lead very far; if there is to be a great or fundamental change in human nature, it is the Divine Grace alone that can bring it about. The surpassing of man is a miracle and only the supreme magician as an Avatar can do it. Others, again, are not prone to believe in a physical Incarnation—somewhat difficult usually for a European mind—but would accept subtler forces or even superior beings, other than the human category, as aids and agents in the working out of the great future.

It is India's great achievement and speciality that she has found the way—the way to all truly high fulfilment. It is Yoga and the Yogic consciousness. Yoga is the science and art of discovering the higher truths, indeed, the highest reality and of living there, not a midway moral elevation only. In its integral view it combines all the three processes mentioned above. The Yogic consciousness seeks to lift the consciousness as high as possible, in fact, to the very highest—it literally means union or identity (with the highest Reality, Spirit or God.) Thus it has the true perception or vision of the forces that act in and upon the world and the powers that decide and is in union with them. The Yogic consciousness and power is also embodied in the Divine Incarnation—for he is Yogeshwara: and in India it is accepted as a commonplace that God descends in a human shape, whenever there is a great crisis and man needs salvaging and salvation. God comes then with all his angels, with the divine host to battle for him and with him to establish the Dharma.

Sri Aurobindo's stand in this field is very definite and clear. The goal or end is clear, and with it the way too. What he envisages is the transformation of Matter and material life, that is to say, neither rejecting it as an impossible thing nor trying to gloss it over with a coat of mental luminosity, but delving into it and cleaning and purifying it, removing its mire and dross wholly and absolutely so that its true divine nature comes out and remains as Nature's highest and fullest expression on

earth. That is the goal: the way too is not less characteristic. The total spiritual transformation, the divinisation of Matter is possible, not only possible but inevitable, because it is Matter that wants it, because Matter in its essence, in its true reality is spiritual energy, is the Spirit itself. That is the great secret Sri Aurobindo has brought to light. The ideals in the past for the reclamation of human nature and reformation of human society were tackled with mental and moral powers which were not adequate to the task. Even when the spiritual power was invoked, it was of the static category which is above, aloof, witness and can have at best a kindly look and influence. That the spirit dynamic is involved in Matter and as Matter is a truth that has to be discovered.

The supreme creative power of the Spirit—Truth-Consciousness—Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind. This power is not only up there above, but it is here below and within Matter. It is a power of Matter itself, its most secret power. Truth-Consciousness or Supermind congealed, solidified or crystallised under certain conditions becomes Matter: now to re-become its own true self and nature is the very drive of Matter, that is the true sense of evolution. The very nature of Matter makes its transformation absolutely inevitable. It obeys no alien force or rule, its achievement means self-fulfilment and therefore it is something destined and, when done, permanent and perfect.

## XXXI

### LIGHT, MORE LIGHT

LIGHT is its own authenticity. Modern knowledge has reduced the material universe to light particles: that is the ultimate reality which is cognisable to the human sense, beyond which there is no means to go. All other objects are reflections, measures or derivations of this single primordial substance—at least all have to reach our perception through this intermediary. And its movement, its velocity too is the standard of measure for all movements: the velocity is constant and nothing can exceed it (that is Einstein).

There is an inner light too. The virtues of the outer light only translate something of the nature of the inner light. You cannot prove the existence of light, inner or outer; it exists in its own light and itself serves to prove things that exist. Not only that. Light is not only a power of knowledge, it is also a power of action: it not only illuminates, but also purifies. It clears up and as well cleans up.

But where is to be found this inner light? How is it to be recognised? Does it truly require no introduction like the outer light? What are its characters and attributes, its signs and signals? The light is in one's own consciousness, one has simply to become aware of it. It is mixed up with darkness, embedded in obscurity, as diamond or

gold lies concealed in its ore. But, as I have said, light carries its own authenticity. One cannot fail to recognise it, provided—and that is the sole and sufficient provision—one is genuinely willing to recognise. A sincere good-will is all that is required in this apparently arduous labour.

Here is a significant mystery and of capital importance. We refer to an activity of the consciousness which is not completely hidden or behind the veil: it appears covered, because we do not care to look at it, because it is likely to be of an uncomfortable kind and that because we feel safe and cosy at the lowest level of our consciousness and to mount and rise or to be vigilant and straight means effort and trouble.

Let us explain. Man is not as ignorant and helpless as he seems to be, as he would himself consider to be. There is in him always a spark, under the ashes, as it were, a perfect freedom behind the façade of a network of bondages, not dead or dormant but biding the time, to come out and be active on the surface. The spark is the light that directs to the right and warns against the wrong; the freedom is the choice to do the right and avoid the wrong. It is just a point of perception, just a flash of awareness, but net and clear: it is there, you have only to notice it. It does not give the why or the whither of the rightness: it is a simple declaration presented to you, for you to do what you like with it: to ignore or to profit by. Usually we do not pay attention to it: our attention is diverted towards another direction and other things. Our environment, our education, our domestic and social



influences, even a good part of our own nature demand of us other ways of living and inhibit the spontaneous inherent light of the consciousness. Even so, if we care to look at it, if we sincerely turn round and ask for it, we will find it still there—the flame behind the smoke, the queen in the harem, the deity in the sanctum. What is required is just a straight look and not the crooked wink we are accustomed to. The first attempts will necessarily mean a little fumbling, but if you mean what you do, you will find your vision getting clearer. It is our own disinclination that weaves the cobweb of ignorance around the truth. Otherwise, an unsophisticated consciousness, a consciousness which is not vitiated—more often by nurture than by nature—can always feel the presence of the truth and is directly aware of it.

A blinded misdirected mind, if it wakes up at any time and looks about for the truth *sincerely*—we insist upon the condition—can recognise it, learn to trace it by certain indications it always leaves behind in the consciousness. A touch of the truth, a step towards it will be always accompanied by a sense of relief, of peace, of a serene happiness and unconditional freedom. These things are felt not as something gross and superficial affecting your outer life and situation, but pertaining to the depth of your being, concerning your inmost fibre—it is nothing else but just the sense of light, as if you are at last out of the dark. A right movement brings you that feeling; and whenever you have that feeling you know that there has been the right movement. On the contrary, with a wrong

movement you are ill at ease. You may say that a hardened criminal is never ill at ease; perhaps, but only after a great deal of hardening. The criminal was not always a criminal—I am speaking of a human being, not a born *hostile*—he must have started somewhere the downward incline. The distinction of the right and the wrong must have been presented to his consciousness and the choice was freely his. Afterwards one gets bound to one's Karma and its chain.

Anyway, we are concerned particularly with one who asks for the truth and reality, the aspirant who is ready for the discipline. To the aspiring soul, to one who sincerely wishes to see the truth, it has been said, the truth unveils its body. The unveiling is gradual: the perception of the reality grows, the sensibility becomes refined, the vision clearer and clearer. The first step, as in all things, is the most decisive. For once all on a sudden, probably when you are off your guard, you know, in a flash, as it were, here is the right thing to do or the right thing you have done or even the wrong you have not done. You have thus secured the clue: and it is up to you now to pursue the clue.

The question of false light or of wrong perception need not trouble you too much. If you are sincere, if you have the correct attitude, things will come always right to you. The trouble is for him who is not himself true or does not propose to be true.

This spontaneous recognition of the light in you is also called, in the Yogic language, *openness*. It means you are



ready, at least, something in you is ready, to accept and admit the light when it presents itself before you. If you have any hesitation to receive it for its own sake, if you wish to corroborate your initial perception you can look for its sign manual: the peace, the freedom, the elevation, the quiet certitude, the exquisite sweetness or gladness it brings, its own luminosity which is found neither here nor elsewhere but in its own body of self.

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